ALL NEW ZELDA — FORGET WIND WAKER, THIS IS THE NUTS!

BEST EVER MAG!

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

CVG

THE WORLD'S FIRST & BEST GAMES MAG

THE FUTURE NOW

GIANT E3 GAMES SHOW BLOW-OUT

NINTENDO DS VS SONY PSP

FULL-ON HANDHELD COMBAT!

EVERY GAME PLAYED
✶VERDICTS
ONLY IN CVG

WORLD EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

Splinter Cell 3

Get the scoop on the stealth epic that blows away Pandora Tomorrow. Believe it!

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON PLAYTESTS OF ALL THESE

HALO 2 ✶ MGS 3
TIMESPLITTERS 3
METROID PRIME 2
GRAN TURISMO 4
GOLDENEYE
ROGUE AGENT
KILLZONE ✶ DOOM 3
RESIDENT EVIL 4
DEVIL MAY CRY 3
SPIDER-MAN 2

PLUS! TEKKEN 5 ✶ PRINCE OF PERSIA 2
HALF-LIFE 2 ✶ FORZA MOTORSPORT
WWE DAY OF RECKONING & 100S MORE!

SYPHON FILTER OMEGA STRAIN

PS2's online Metal Gear wannabe reviewed

RED DEAD REVOLVER

REVIEWED
Does Rockstar's six-shooter smoke or choke?

grand theft auto SanAndreas

FIRST PICS!

HOTTER THAN VICE CITY! PLUS STORY DETAILS INSIDE

87 GAMES RATED

ONIMUSHA 3 ✶ GT4 PROLOGUE ✶ F-ZERO 2 ✶ THIEF 3
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR ✶ SMASH COURT TENNIS 2
WINNING ELEVEN 7 INTERNATIONAL ✶ DRAKENGARD
MARIO GOLF ✶ HARRY POTTER AZKABAN ✶ BOKTAI
.HACK 2 ✶ DEADLY SKIES 3 ✶ AND LOADS MORE!

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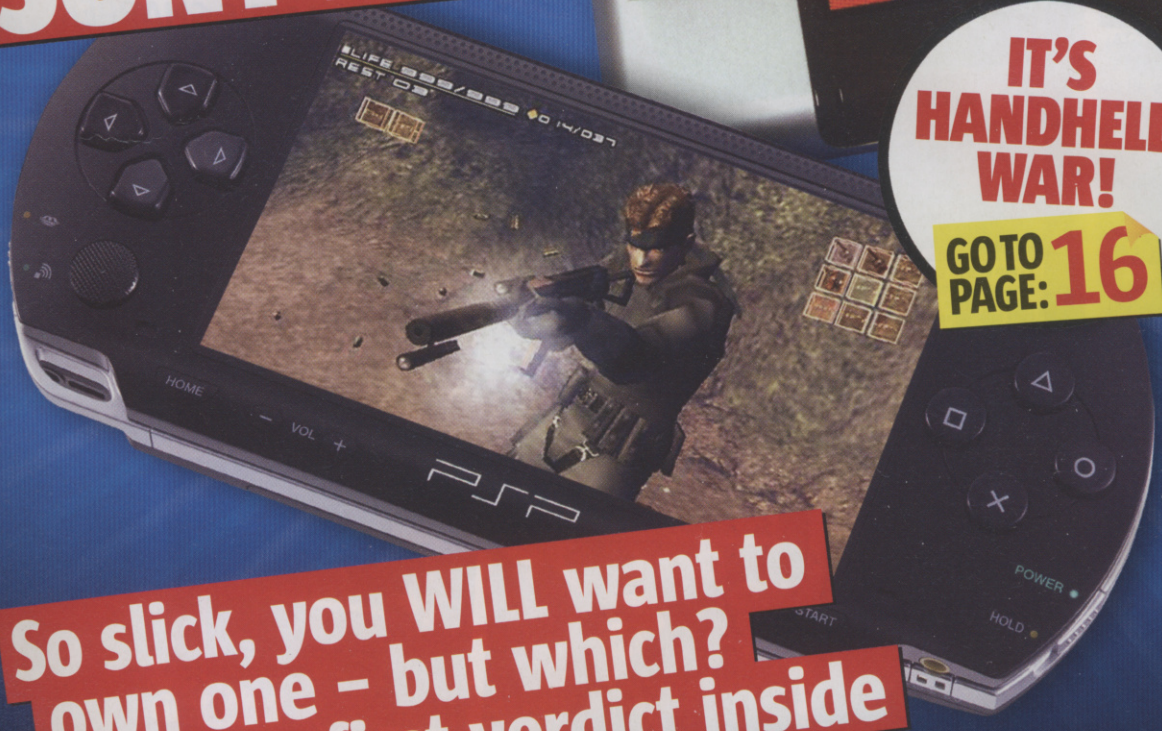
JULY 2004

THE MONTH THAT...

CVG gives you the scoop on Sony and Nintendo's new handheld wonders
PLUS world's first GTA San Andreas pics!

NINTENDO DS VS SONY PSP



IT'S HANDHELD WAR!

GO TO PAGE: 16

So slick, you WILL want to own one – but which? Hands-on first verdict inside

PLUS:
GTA: SAN ANDREAS
HALO 2
SPLINTER CELL 3
ALL-NEW ZELDAS
METROID PRIME 2
MGS3 + MG ACID
GOLDENEYE
DEVIL MAY CRY 3
PRINCE OF PERSIA 2
NFS: UNDERGROUND 2
RIDDICK
GO TO PAGE 6 NOW!

CVG IN NUMBERS

NUMBER OF GAMES	NUMBER OF SCREENS	GAMES RATED	E3 BOOTH BABES
487	901	87	19

E3 SPECIAL TURN OVER FOR A GAMES AVALANCHE!

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES

CVG

JULY 2004 ISSUE

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The cel-shading's gone, and Link's grown up for this more intense instalment of the cast-iron classic series. Get all the latest here

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Gran Turismo 4
Check out the wow factor of the new tracks – you'll never have seen a racer this purdy! It may have been delayed but it's gonna be worth it

40

Prince Of Persia 2
One of the best 3D platformers ever is back. Gone is the cartooney setting, in comes ultra-violence: heads get cut off and bellies sliced open!

SUPER-SIZE YOUR GAMING DIET!

Welcome to the fattest month of the year. It's E3 and we've got hundreds of the biggest new games bulging out of every X-Large page!

Chow down on the first chunky details and tasty pics of GTA: San Andreas! Get a gutful of the world's first hands-on with Halo 2! Suck up all the facts of PSP and Nintendo DS! Plus pig out on CVG's juicy Splinter Cell 3 first look exclusive! There's so much new stuff to swallow. Could call for a tactical chunder!

Alex Simmons

Alex Simmons *Editor*

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We sift the gaming hits from the shits and crimp off CVG's coveted best of show awards

the team

SPOT THE SPAWNY BASTARDS WHO SWANNED OFF TO E3

Alex Simmons **Editor**

Al's just got back from Mexico. He's brown as a button, though most of that's the dung locals threw at him.

Pete Walker **Managing Editor**

Pete's a gardener, but couldn't work out why his fingers fell off. 'Not green,' the doc said, 'gangrene.'

Mike Cooper **News Editor**

Over in E3, Mike wouldn't share his lobster with Paul at the after-show party. Shellsfish bastard.

Graeme Boyd **Staff Writer**

Since he moved to London, Boydie's gone a little Metrosexual. But then we always said he licks balls.

Paul Davies **Contributing Ed**

Paul Davies wet his pants when Arsenal won the title and stayed unbeaten. No, he did.

Steve O'Hagan **Gimp**

Steve helps out for free: Maybe it's cos Al's got his dear old mum chained up in the stationery closet.

Jaime Smith **Art Editor**

Those aren't actually Jaime's real eyes. He's had so little sleep he's had to paint peepers onto his lids.

Mike Newson **Design Troll**

Mike's not talking to us since we asked him about his Hollywood debut in Shrek 2 this month.

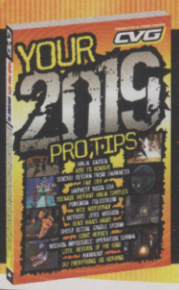
IN THE BOOKS

CVG MASTER GUIDES #4

100% COMPLETE GUIDES TO THE BEST GAMES

VAN HELSING
- Every level busted, every secret revealed!

NINJA GAIDEN
- Harder than a solid granite baseball bat. Here's how to beat it



YOUR 2019 PRO TIPS

BUSTIN' TIPS FOR THOUSANDS OF GAMES!

- Ninja Gaiden
- Rise To Honour
- Tenchu: Return From Darkness
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- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
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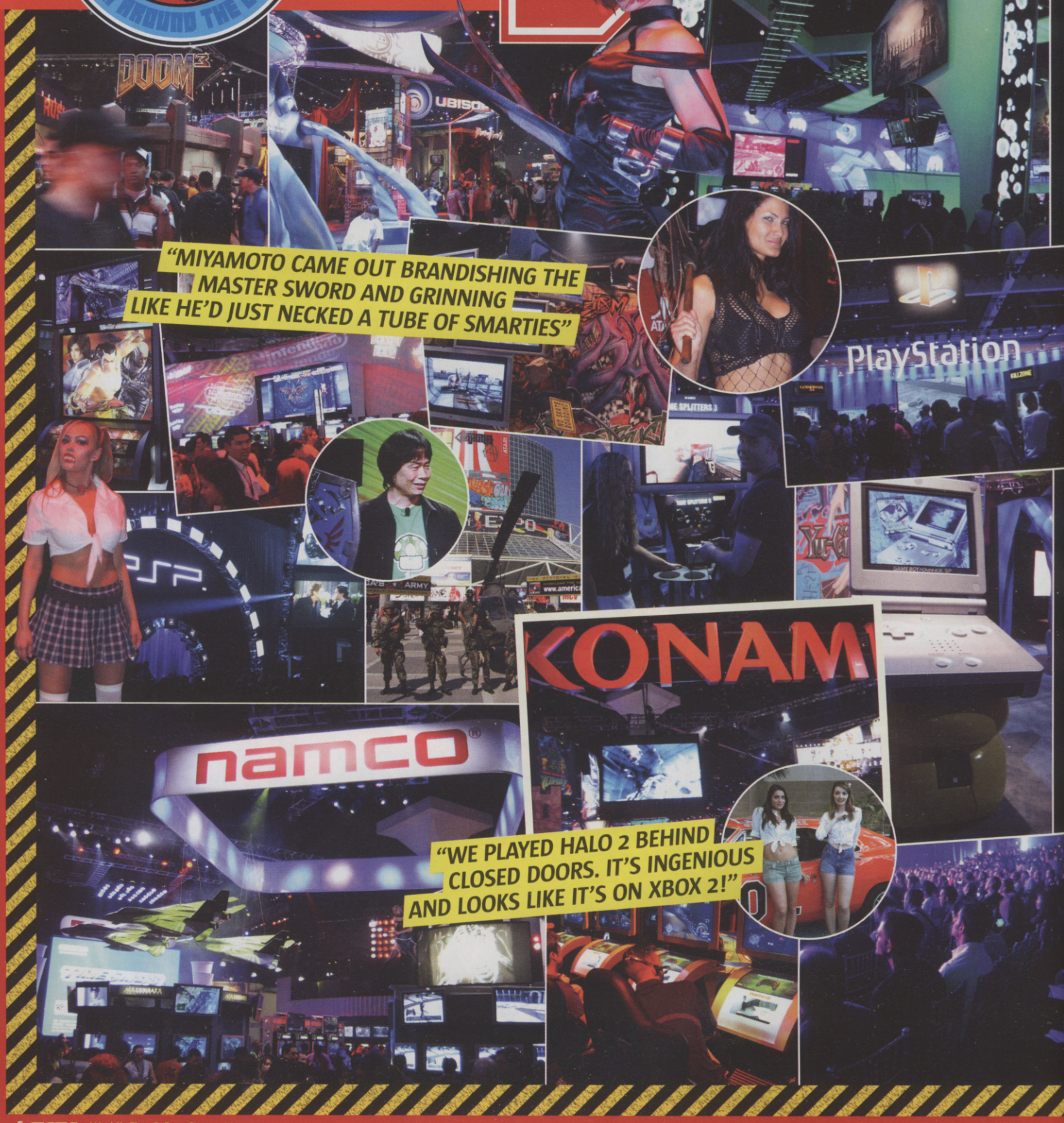
FLIP IT FOR THE RED HOT SCOOP

TURN OVER FOR MORE

This is a special one-off CVG. To celebrate the greatest games show on earth, E3, and the tons of titles on show there, we're bringing you a massive extended edition of Planet CVG...

E3 NEWS SPECIAL



"MIYAMOTO CAME OUT BRANDISHING THE MASTER SWORD AND GRINNING LIKE HE'D JUST NECKED A TUBE OF SMARTIES"

"WE PLAYED HALO 2 BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. IT'S INGENIOUS AND LOOKS LIKE IT'S ON XBOX 2!"

STOP PRESS

PS3 CELLS ITS SOUL

SONY TALKS MORE ABOUT ITS NEXT-GEN MACHINE

With PSP on the horizon we've almost forgotten about PS3.

Sony didn't say much about its next-gen monster except that we could expect a look at their fancy new Cell technology, designed in conjunction with IBM and Toshiba, towards the end of the year.

The idea is to create a powerful tool for developers to harness the huge power of PS3, so hopefully we'll be seeing tech demos like Xbox's XNA stuff pretty soon.

However, we doubt that Sony will unveil any concept images of the actual machine until next year's E3 show.

On a more cryptic note, Sony spoke about PS3 having a 'Cyber World' where you could 'jack in' and gather any type of entertainment you want – games, movies AND music. Sounds a bit like the Matrix, and if we have to stick a spike in our heads we're not buying it. Actually, we probably would.

THE FUTURE NOW

THE NEXT 38 PAGES ARE STUFFED TO BURSTING POINT WITH THE HOTTEST NEW GAMES FROM E3!

EXCUSE ME SIR, HAVE YOU SEEN THIS LADY'S CLOTHES?

We were in the crowd when Nintendo unveiled the new Zelda game for Cube, and we swear that a guy in front of us fell to his knees and started bawling with joy when he saw grown-up Link appear on the big screen!

That's what a show like E3 does to you. It makes you go a little nuts. Okay we didn't cry, but we did let out little bum quacks of excitement at every big announcement and when we got hands-on with showstoppers like Halo 2 – check out page 26 and you'll see why!

It was the best show in years with Sony, Nintendo and Microsoft wowing the world with the quality of their upcoming console titles.

PS2 packed in the crowds with the first playable demo of Metal Gear Solid 3 – the new camo system and free-roaming jungle environments went down a storm. Then there's San Andreas! Technically it wasn't on the show floor. However, Rockstar chose the show to unveil the very first screenshots and titillate us with some facts, so you can imagine the fever pitch excitement that erupted on the show floor when the first nuggets emerged. Flip the page for all the latest hard facts!

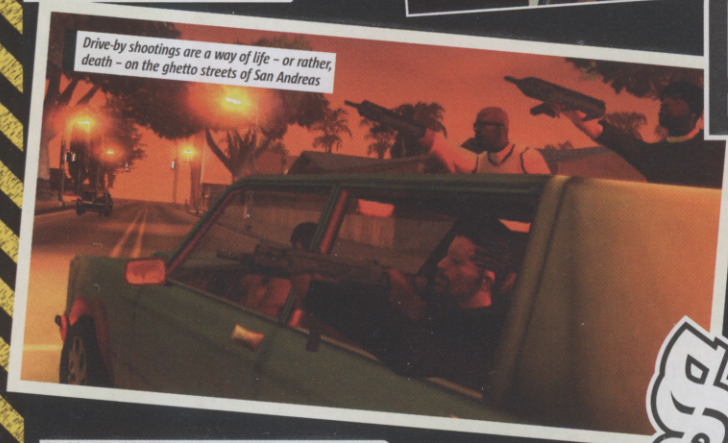
Microsoft's mountainous Xbox Live line-up crippled us with excitement too. Forza Motorsport is basically Xbox's GT4, but with damageable Ferraris and Porsches and killer customisation. Then there's Killzone, Doom 3, and of course Splinter Cell 3!

But this was the year of the handheld, when Sony entered the arena and challenged Nintendo's decades of portable gaming experience. It was a titanic showdown between PSP and Nintendo DS, and blood was spilt. Flick forward to page 16 to see the two pocket rockets fighting it out! Enjoy the show...

Mike turns up for the first day of E3. This was the last time he saw any sunlight in three days

"THE BOOTH BABES LET US TAKE PHOTOS OF THEM IN POSES TOO RAUNCHY FOR PENTHOUSE"

grand theft auto San Andreas


Drive-by shootings are a way of life – or rather, death – on the ghetto streets of San Andreas

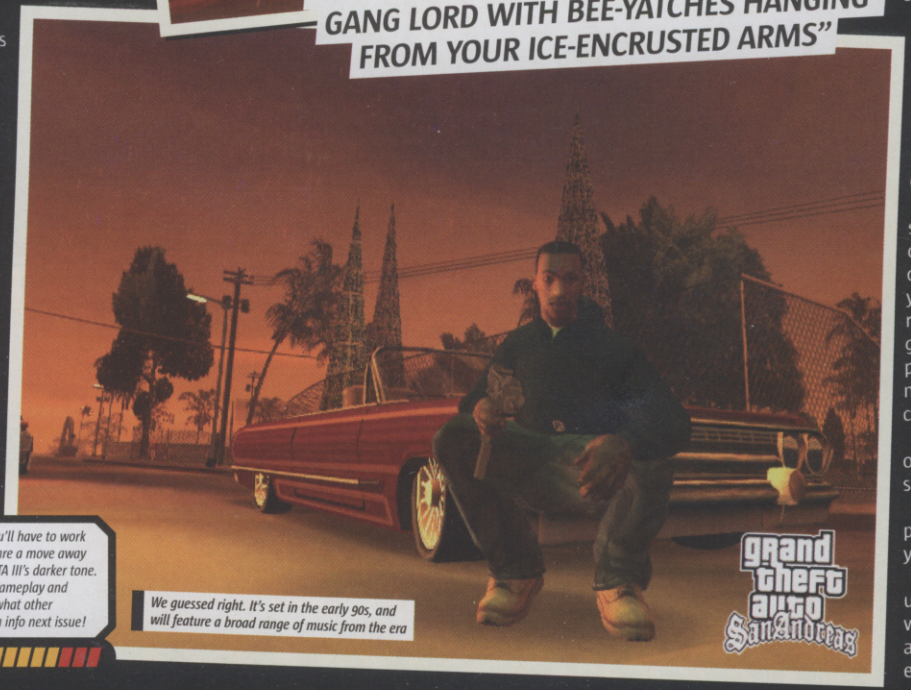
ON: PS2 PUB: ROCKSTAR OUT: 22 OCTOBER

THUGGED-OUT FIRST OFFICIAL SCREENS AND INFO FOR ROCKSTAR'S WEST-COAST GANG BANGER!

Even though loads of huge announcements were screaming out of E3, the game EVERYONE is excited about suddenly became one of the stars of the show when Rockstar unveiled first screens and facts and US games mag Game Informer came out with the first official story. Here's the scoop...

Not that we think we're ace or anything, but we nailed San Andreas' setting two issues ago – it's confirmed the game will take place in the early 1990s against a backdrop of gang violence and ghetto stylin'. The main character is Carl Johnson (CJ), a young black guy (that's him crouching in front of the lowrider in the screen at the bottom) who's returned to his 'hood to avenge his mum's murder. The heat's on his case though – looks like CJ's past isn't spotless – and he gets framed for a murder by some crooked cops. He's gonna have to fight the gangs and the cops till he owns the streets and badlands of San Andreas!

"YOU'LL END UP AS A BIG PIMPIN' GANG LORD WITH BEE-YATCHES HANGING FROM YOUR ICE-ENCRUSTED ARMS"



We guessed right. It's set in the early 90s, and will feature a broad range of music from the era

STREET DREAMS

As for San Andreas itself, it isn't just one city but a WHOLE STATE!

CJ is straight outta Los Santos (LA), a place where gangs and dealers rub shoulders with film stars and millionaires. San Fiero (San Francisco) and Las Ventura (Las Vegas) will definitely be included too. But here's the cherry – each area is the size of Vice City... and there's more! All the hills, mountains and deserts in between are in there – dotted with strange places and freaky out-of-towners.

GHETTO FABULOUS

You're gonna be able to sink real deep into the GTA universe this time out. Vice City only touched on buying buildings and exploring interiors, but San Andreas takes this aspect to a new level. You'll be able to gamble in casinos, build properties, and even rob houses on your rise to power! And the robberies will need careful planning, though Rockstar hasn't divulged details of how the heists work just yet.

That's not all. You gotta eat to survive in San Andreas, but chomp up donuts like Homer Simpson and CJ will develop into a lardy chozzer. This affects your physical abilities – you'll have rubbish stamina and won't be able to get around quickly. But hit the gym and pump iron and CJ will get faster, more muscular and athletic. Plus at last you can swim!

Street battles will be an everyday occurrence, with gangs pulling drive-by shootings to protect their turf.

And yup, that IS a BMX bike! Pedal power will enable you to lose cops as you scoot through narrow back-alleys.

Rise from lowly street thug and end up as a full-on, big pimpin' gang lord with gold chains dripping from your neck and bee-yatches hanging from your ice-encrusted arms. The shizzle? Fo' shizzle.

THE OFFICIAL LOWDOWN

Here's the full story details direct from Rockstar: Five years ago Carl Johnson escaped from the pressures of life in Los Santos, San Andreas... a city tearing itself apart with gang trouble, drugs and corruption. Where filmstars and millionaires do their best to avoid the dealers and gangbangers.

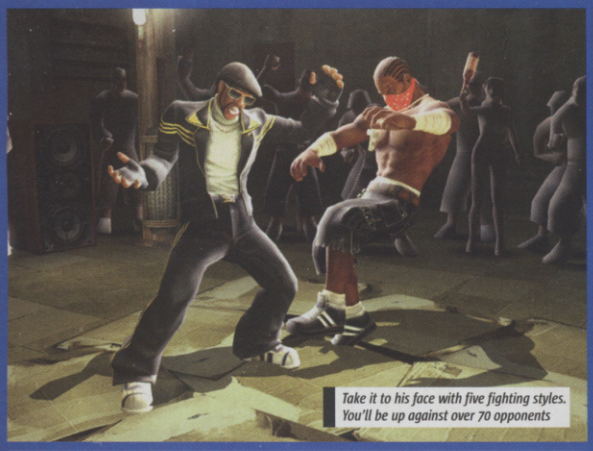
Now it's the early 90s. Carl's got to go home. His mother has been murdered, his family has fallen apart and his childhood friends are all heading towards disaster.

On his return to the neighbourhood, a couple of corrupt cops frame him for homicide. CJ is forced on a journey that takes him across the entire state of San Andreas, to save his family and take control of the streets.

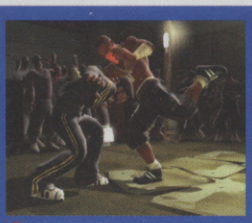
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Definitely looking ghetto fabulous but you'll have to work for your bling. The moody environments are a move away from Vice City's pastels and a return to GTA III's darker tone. We're still expecting the same amazing gameplay and sense of humour, but it'll be cool to see what other surprises Rockstar has in store. More killa info next issue!

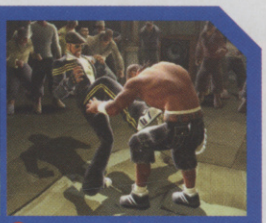
EXCITE METER



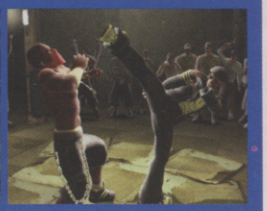
Take it to his face with five fighting styles. You'll be up against over 70 opponents



F@ck the Queensbury Rules, this is ghetto scrappin'



A swift kick to the knackers has the same effect on everyone



ON: PS2, XBOX, GC PUB: EA BIG OUT: SEPTEMBER

DEF JAM: FIGHT FOR NEW YORK CITY

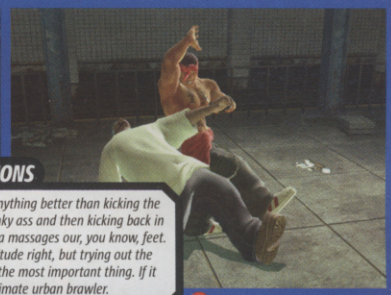
RAPPIN' WRESTLERS FREESTYLE IT OUT OF THE RING AND ONTO THE STREETS!

Def Jam Vendetta was a cracking idea: hip-hop's hottest artists beating the bling out of each other as they battled for the honeys.

It played pretty well too, so we were excited to see Def Jam 2 unveiled. The biggest change is the fighting has moved from the ring into subway stations and backstreets. The grappling engine's been overhauled and five fighting styles are included so you can create your own brand of whupass.

The beats will be awesome, with Ludacris, Busta Rhymes, Sean Paul, Redman and Snoop Dogg among 40 artists signed up, with Carmen Electra providing the booty. Good gracious, ass is bodacious!

Brawl it up in subway stations and building yards



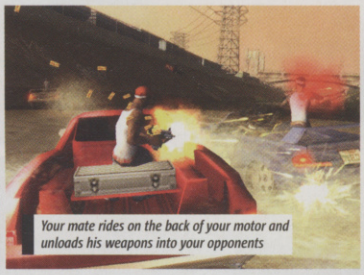
Wrestling moves are still included for grapple fans

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

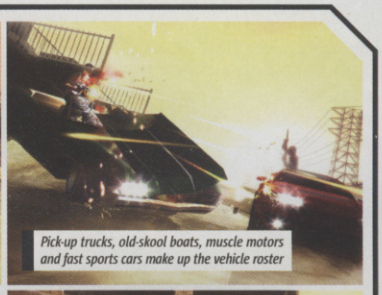
We honestly can't think of anything better than kicking the crap out of Snoop Dogg's lanky ass and then kicking back in the crib while Carmen Electra massages our, you know, feet. Def Jam 2's def-o got the attitude right, but trying out the new fighting engine will be the most important thing. If it gets it right this'll be the ultimate urban brawler.

EXCITE METER

Tracks will be stuffed with jumps and shortcuts for some flamboyant racing acrobatics. BOOM!



Your mate rides on the back of your motor and unloads his weapons into your opponents



Pick-up trucks, old-skool boats, muscle motors and fast sports cars make up the vehicle roster

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: UBISOFT OUT: JANUARY 2005

NOTORIOUS: DIE TO DRIVE

PIMPED-OUT LOWRIDERS TURBO-CHARGED WITH HIGH-OCTANE HIP-HOP BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY

So you've got a smooth motor sitting on 24-inch rims and fitted out with so much ICE the bass melts your bones? What else do you need?

We asked the guys at Ubisoft and they reckon you need a mate packing twin Uzis to clear the road of playa-hating traffic. At least, that's Notorious' idea of defensive driving.

It's a remix of the racing game cut up with hip-hop beats. You'll be able to choose from over 30 motors from classics like Cadillac-style pimp-mobiles to high-powered, hard-driving modern muscle cars. There are four LA-styled neighbourhoods to race through, but you won't just have to rely on your driving skills – hook yourself up with one of over 20 weapons like shotguns, bazookas and Molotov Cocktails and you'll be able to blaze your way to glory. Imagine Midnight Club souped up with explosions.

The most important thing in Notorious is about being the most powerful racer on the block. Winning races and smoking your rivals will send your respect through the roof, letting you max out your car, your weapons and your crib.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Mixing up Midnight Club and NFS Underground's street racing with rapid-fire weaponry and hip-hop attitude sounds like a great idea, but Notorious' driving model will have to be spot on. Increasing your rep on the streets sounds cool, especially if it means stacks of cash, but we hope the hip-hop styling isn't just a cheap gimmick.

EXCITE METER

We're expecting Mario Kart-style battle modes where you can blow the crap out of your pals. No word on online yet, but the smart money says: YUP

Your aim is going to be as important as your driving skills if you want to be the Notorious B.I.G.

You'll be able to cause mayhem with loads of weapons as innocents get in the line of fire

25 TO LIFE

EIDOS TAKES IT TO THE STREETS WITH HIP-HOP COPS AND ROBBERS

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: EIDOS OUT: SPRING 2005

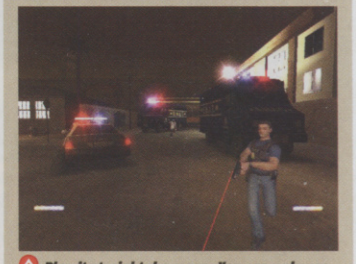
When you're high-rollin' like GTA you've got to watch your back. There's always someone waiting to take your place.

25 To Life is another thug gunning for GTA's throne. You get the chance to play as either a street hood or a cop as you build your reputation on the streets by protecting your turf, eliminating your enemies, and basically being the biggest badass out there.

Expect GTA-style gameplay, but the coolest thing about 25 To Life is that you can play online with 16 other gangstas, fighting it out SOCOM-style for control of the 'hood. USB headset is supported too, so smack-talkin' skills will be essential. Dropping next spring.

The soundtrack is stuffed with new and classic hip-hop beats like DMX and 2Pac

You'll be able to customise your character with big brand hip-hop clothing and jewellery



Play it straight: be a cop. You can only use certain weapons but your accuracy is better

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Playing like a cross between SOCOM's tactical planning and GTA's street-level action, 25 To Life could be a cool spin on the gangsta game. The ghetto levels are dotted with nice details like barking dogs, car alarms and motion-sensing floodlights, producing a tense and edgy experience. If the online modes work well, this could be huge.

EXCITE METER

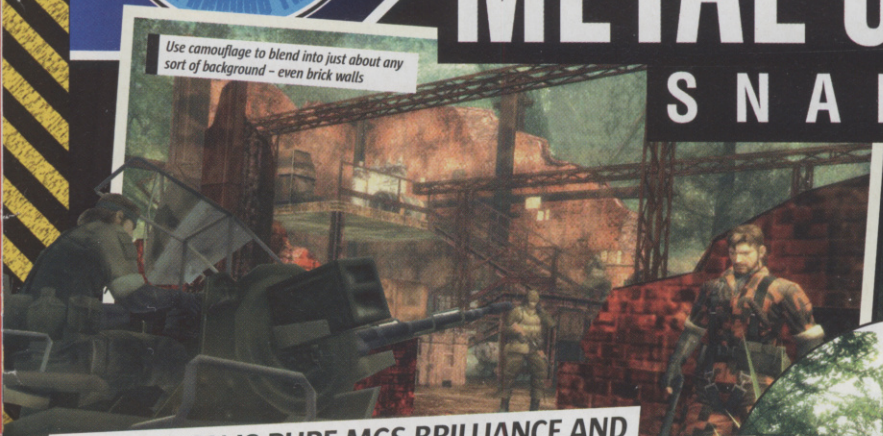
NEWS SPECIAL

TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

METAL GEAR SOLID® 3

SNAKE EATER

WE GET TO PLAY IN THE JUNGLE



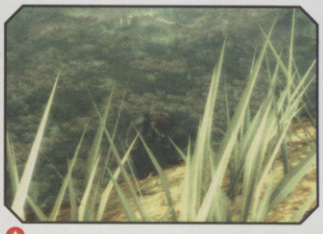
Use camouflage to blend into just about any sort of background – even brick walls

If this gunfight gets too much, Snake can hop over the side and shimmy along the edge

"THE ACTION IS PURE MGS BRILLIANCE AND LOOKING DEAD TASTY – IF YOU CAN FIND YOURSELF IN THE JUNGLE WITHOUT A RADAR"

Helicopters search for Snake, but his new camouflage skills keep him safe

Snake looks like an alien in his oxygen mask, just before making a base jump



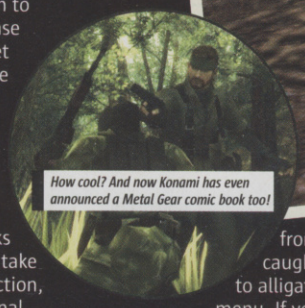
Patrolling guards can be standing right above Snake and still not see him

There was a bizarre surprise for Snake fans at E3; namely a new James Bond-inspired title movie, with snakes instead of women – naturally. It wasn't the start we were expecting, but don't worry – the rest of what was revealed is pure class.

1967: Snake is sent on Operation Snake Eater, a mission to infiltrate a Russian base deep within the Soviet Union. He must locate a scientist suspected of creating a new form of nuclear weapon dubbed the Metal Gear. Despite a somewhat familiar plot, Snake Eater looks like being a cool new take on Snake's stealthy action, where all the traditional components of the game have been tweaked to expand the action.

For example, we've told you about camouflage before, where the closer you get to matching your surroundings with your choice of camouflage, the higher your stealth rating. There's also the importance of eating, as it builds stamina, heals wounds quicker and stops Snake's stomach from rumbling! All food must be caught or hunted. From mushrooms to alligators, there's plenty on the menu. If you're out hunting you'll want to keep a close eye on the grass and listen out for rustling, telltale signs of an animal's presence.

If that sounds too much like the boring bits in Deer Hunter, don't worry – there are tons of gunfights and boss battles as well, with a young Revolver Ocelot, and villains with flame-throwers and even jet packs! We can't wait to get legless with Snake.



How cool? And now Konami has even announced a Metal Gear comic book too!

Use the branches of trees to get around the jungle, Tarzan style

Don't stand still too long in the swamp or you'll sink to your death. Hat or no hat

HANDS-ON PLAY

Konami has learnt a few things from Splinter Cell and really ramped up the Close Quarters Combat element of Snake's repertoire. Toying with the camouflage is fun – it really works in making the game deeper and more enjoyable. You feel so much more inside the experience of a sneaky mission.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The new Snake Eater movies at E3 were as spectacular as ever. But hands-on with Snake Eater and it seems that Kojima still hasn't learnt to let the dialogue and cut-scenes go. They still interrupt the action too frequently. Thankfully the action is pure MGS brilliance and looking dead tasty – if you can find yourself in the jungle without a radar.

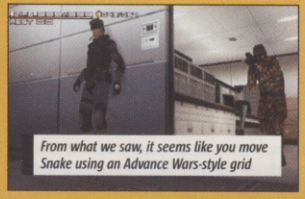
EXCITE METER

METAL GEAR ACID

SNAKE SHOWS WHAT THE PSP IS MADE OF

ON: PSP PUB: KONAMI OUT: 2005

One of the big E3 surprises was a brand new Metal Gear game for the PSP. Before you get too excited like we did, all is not quite as it seems...



From what we saw, it seems like you move Snake using an Advance Wars-style grid

Despite boasting graphics reminiscent of Snake's first outing on the PS2, Metal Gear Acid isn't a full-on action title but a third-person card battling/RPG/strategy game! Yep, we're just as baffled as you.

But before you burn an effigy of Solid Snake in disgust, Acid does have some potential. Imagine the grid-based training sections of the Metal Gear games, combined with a turn-based strategy game complete with card battling powers, and you slowly realise that although it's not what you expected, it is strangely still appealing.

ONE TO WATCH

Select your attack, then watch Snake dramatically take his enemy out

The small grid in the top right of the screen features your tactical and weapon choices

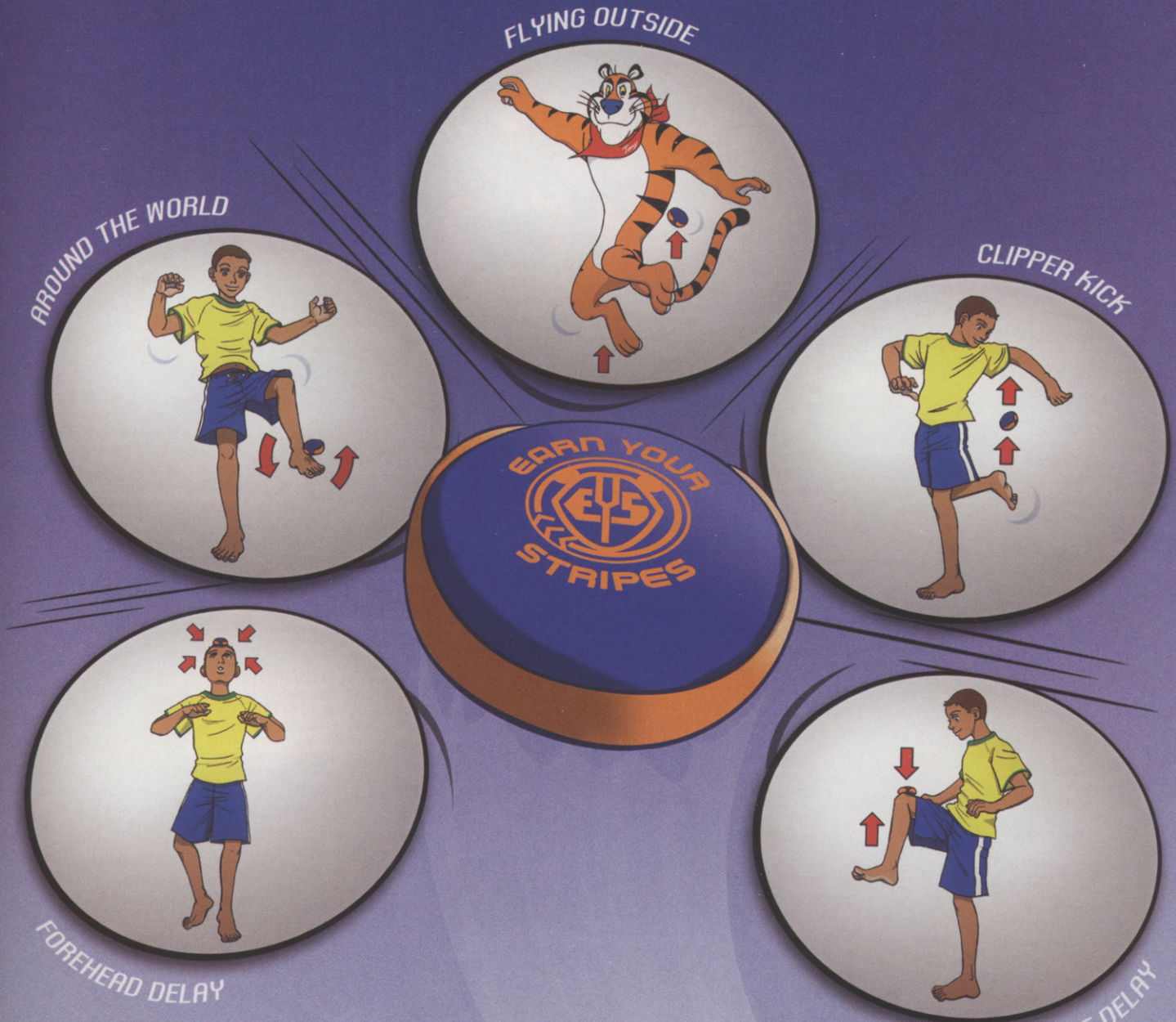
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When we learnt of the PSP's performance power, this wasn't how we imagined playing with Snake on the handheld. Despite the double shock of a new Metal Gear game on PSP and then the realisation of what it actually was, MGA is still a good indication of just how powerful the PSP is, and what it could do a few years down the line.

EXCITE METER

Footy buddy fever!

Get one free in special packs.



Get your free footy buddy in special packs.
Eat right. Practice hard. Earn Your Stripes.

© 2004 Kellogg Company

WORLD EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK

SHOW SHOCKER

ON: PC, XBOX PUB: UBISOFT OUT: TBC

SPLINTER CELL 3

WHILE WE'VE BEEN OBSESSED WITH PANDORA TOMORROW, SAM FISHER'S BEEN IN TRAINING. NOW HE'S SHARPER, MEANER AND STEALTHIER THAN EVER!

Ubisoft smuggled CVG into a dark room at E3 to give us the exclusive world's first look at Splinter Cell 3 and we've got the carpet burns on our chins to prove it.

Pandora Tomorrow is the nuts, but everyone's favourite pipe-dangling danger-man has seriously upped his game to take stealth to nosebleed-inducing new heights. Sam Fisher's third outing ramps up the tension to the point where you feel your nerves might just turn to jelly and seep out of your skin.

See, because this time so much of the focus is on adrenalised close proximity encounters with enemies and even more dramatic stealth kills. Our man's now equipped with some of the coolest moves ever to appear in any videogame.

Sam slinks his way along a pipe, legs tucked up, then swings upside-down as a guard enters the room and patrols below. Okay nothing new, but wait! The moment the fella passes beneath Sam reaches down with both hands and grabs the guard's head with lightning speed and precision. He picks him up by his bonce, so that his feet are flapping beneath him, then busts out the killer move – a vicious neck snap (see our exclusive pic, right)!

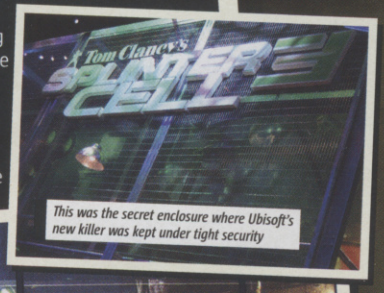
It's an awesome new method of disposing of foes and looks amazing. And, as we've come to expect of the Splinter Cell, all the motion-captured movements are flawless and chillingly believable.

THE FALL GUY

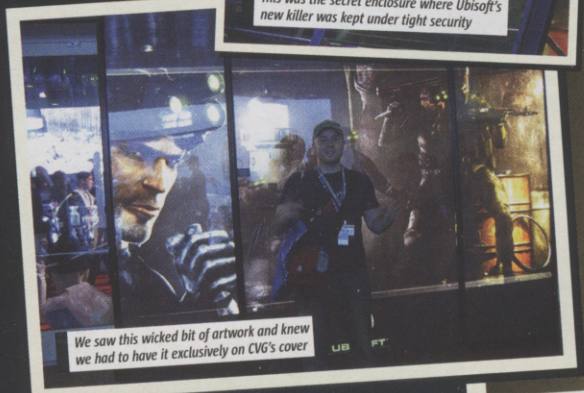
It doesn't stop there. Sam can now interact with enemies within grabbing range as he shimmies along a ledge. Ubisoft showed this off on the opening level of the new single player campaign set in Peru. Fisher is stood on the circular walkway at the top of a wrecked but operational lighthouse, with a guard watching out to sea on the other side. Sam leaps over the railings and edges along using his fingertips until the guard is directly above him. With a single press of a button Sam lurches up at speed and grabs the guard by his flak jacket, yanks him over the railings and sends him plummeting to his death way below!

Just when we thought things couldn't get much cooler Ubisoft played us through an awesome section of one of the levels set in Japan. It's the dead of night and Sam lurks at the bottom of a cluster of boulders and waterfalls leading up to a traditional Japanese house with blossom blowing realistically in the wind. A guard is snooping around for anything suspicious up above. Sam makes a distraction noise and the guard comes down to investigate – only now enemies are better equipped and smarter. The guard lights up a red flare and carries it down to where you're skulking. The graphics are spectacular! All the wet rocks and Sam's wet combat gear glistens in the pinkish light. Sam manages to remain undetected pressed behind a boulder then slips up the rocks and infiltrates the Japanese house.

Once inside you spot a candle flickering on the other side of the room. Obviously Sam can't shoot it out, so what does he do? He sneaks up, cups his hand behind the flame and gently blows it out! He takes out the guard who's come to relight the candle with a new knee-to-the-back attack then slips into a paper-walled corridor with a silhouetted guard patrolling on the other side.



This was the secret enclosure where Ubisoft's new killer was kept under tight security



We saw this wicked bit of artwork and knew we had to have it exclusively on CVG's cover

SPLINTER HELL!

The screens here look awesome but we really wanted to show you more in our WORLD'S FIRST SC3 cover exclusive. Ubisoft did too and promised more but at the time we went to press couldn't deliver 'em (though we're sure you'll agree all the exclusive artwork looks wicked!). Ubi explained: "While SC3 looked incredibly amazing at E3, we're continuing to focus on developing environments and technology in the game." "We definitely wish to provide more visuals to the public to show them our progress, but also want those visuals to accurately represent the final look and feel of the game and provide a true representation. We can say that the game is coming along beautifully and that more visuals will be along very soon." You know where to come...

NEW NECK SNAP

Swing upside-down and don't move a muscle. When a guard passes directly beneath you snap his neck like a chicken

You can use the sound of thunder and other noises to cover up gunshots and any embarrassing sounds you might need to make

Sliding the paper door open would make too much noise. When the guard walks past he jabs a fist through the screen, grabs the guy around the neck and drags him through, ripping a hole in the wall!

This is definitely one of the most outstanding new elements in SC3. The environments are far more interactive and there are many more dramatic ways of disposing of enemies.

A STAB IN THE DARK

More proof of this comes to light when Ubisoft shows us what Sam can do with his new knife. Sam's sneaking through an indoor building site which has areas blocked off with stapled-down sheets of transparent plastic. Now you can take multiple cunning paths to reach your objective.

In this situation Sam whips out his blade, punctures the plastic at head height and cuts a long vertical slit, before ducking down and slipping through.

He does the same move on the Japanese house's paper walls. Plus this time there're more ways to enter a room. There's a new Sneak Open option, which sees Sam crouch and slowly eek open the door, and an extra Bash Door choice that enables him to bust in and knock anyone behind the door to the ground.

Obviously the knife's not just a tool for accessing new places. Sam uses it in close combat, burying it into enemies' bellies. It'll also be available as an interrogation device. Ubisoft confirmed that there'll be other uses for the knife, but refused to blab any extra info at this early stage.

HOW LOW DO YOU GO?

A taster of the new weapons and gadgets were revealed, including a device that slightly disrupts electronic equipment called an E-Beam, which is a melee function on your pistol. It's a subtle device that affects things like TV reception, which can distract a guard by making him go and check out why the picture's screwed, providing Sam with the opportunity to catch him unawares.

A new sniper rifle attachment now enables you to zoom in super close from extremely distant sniping spots. Plus Sam is far better equipped for surviving close-quarters gunfights thanks to his new quick-firing shotgun. But by far the most intriguing weapon, which sadly wasn't on show, is the new Fear Gun. This bizarre piece of kit emits low frequency sounds, which are scientifically known to make people feel uneasy. The idea being that you can lure guards out of areas without rousing suspicion. It's based on ideas that are currently being experimented with in real world militaries, one of which pumps out such high frequency vibes that anyone nearby literally craps their pants with discomfort! However, SC3's Fear Gun is nowhere near as extreme. It's all about subtlety and sly distractions.

JUST THE TWO OF US

All these additions also appear in the all-new online co-op two-player campaign mode – an entirely separate set of missions from the single-player.

You and a mate can team up online and sneak through a whole new game featuring AI enemies and puzzling stealth situations brilliantly designed for two-player action. It's impossible to get through missions without complete communication and co-operation with your partner using the headset. Not to mention the amount of physical interaction the new co-op mode requires.

There's a load of new co-op moves. You can give your partner a mega leg-up to otherwise impossible-to-reach ledges and areas. And while his body is hanging from a ledge or pipe you can climb his body so that you can reach the high spots too! Also reach down from windows or raised levels to pull your buddy up to where you are.

One of the smartest new co-op moves is Duel Rappelling. One of you lowers the other into a room from an air ventilation shaft or similar location. The player doing the lowering can't see what he's doing, so you've got to communicate all the way. It's the ultimate cheeky stealth manoeuvre and the closest any game has come to replicating the tension of that famous scene in the Mission Impossible movie.

Other situations call for one of you to take a vantage point while the other infiltrates. The best example of this was when we were shown one player spying on a skyscraper from a distance, guiding the other as he rappelled down the side, telling his mate which windows had guards in them. However, Ubisoft couldn't confirm whether these new abilities will be available in the player-vs-player online multiplayer options.

Nonetheless, SC3 proves Ubisoft is committed heart and soul to pushing stealth games to never-before-seen places, and we'll be tracking it every step of the way until its launch this Christmas.

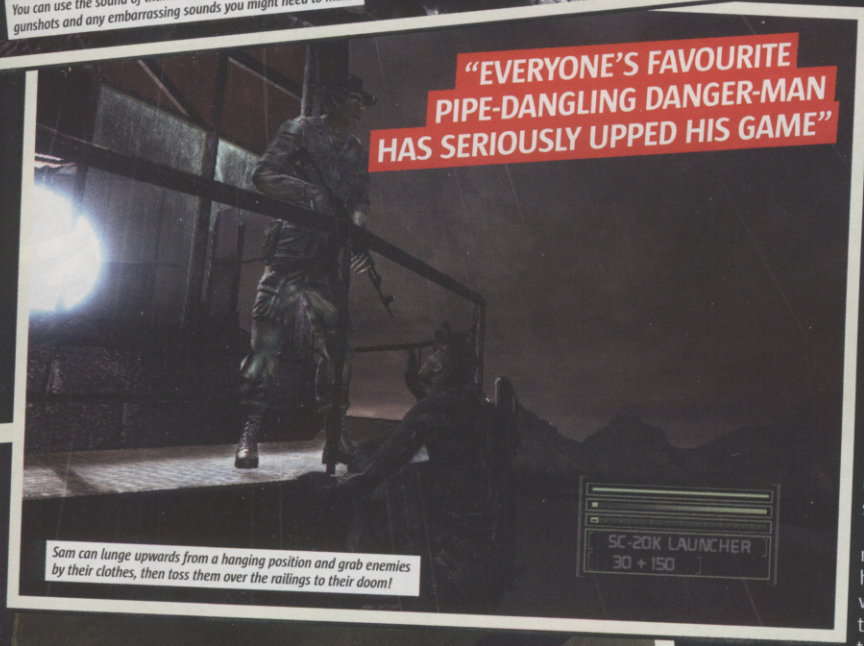
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Sam's stealth skills have been honed to perfection and his new knife moves add a killer pinch to the proceedings. With another huge single-player campaign, separate co-op game and new online multiplayer face-offs this is a top quality package that promises to keep you eagerly sneaking for months on end.

EXCITE METER

You can use the sound of thunder and other noises to cover up gunshots and any embarrassing sounds you might need to make

"EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE PIPE-DANGLING DANGER-MAN HAS SERIOUSLY UPPED HIS GAME"



Sam can lunge upwards from a hanging position and grab enemies by their clothes, then toss them over the railings to their doom!

"OUR MAN'S NOW EQUIPPED WITH SOME OF THE COOLEST MOVES EVER TO APPEAR IN ANY VIDEOGAME"

No one likes a show off darling
PEOPLE
GOLF IS A VERY SERIOUS GAME PLAYED BY VERY SERIOUS
It's not a sandpit it's a bunker
The secret to a great swing is a great trouser.
DANDY FOP
Nintendo.co.uk
Umph
bet you a fiver she misses.
THWAKKK!
OUT 18 JUNE 2004
MARIO GOLF
Toadstool Tour
NINTENDO GAMECUBE
Wrong Wrong Wrong
I whip her every time at Mario Golf.
You wish.
NICE SKIRT KILT MATE
12 Characters
10 Play modes
6 Courses
Hello gorgeous
GET OFF she's mine
Nintendo
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour. ©2004 Nintendo CAMELOT.

"IN AN ISOLATED VILLAGE, FEAR AWAITS. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE VILLAGERS? ARE THEY HUMAN? OR ARE THEY SOMETHING ELSE..."

The C-Stick feels a bit funny for targeting at first but you soon get the hang of it

HANDS-ON PLAY

"I was genuinely blown away by how totally awesome it looks in the flesh. The new controls are almost spot-on – only turning is still a bit awkward. The way Leon interacts with his surroundings and pounds enemies is also astounding. This is the game that the many fans of the series have been crying out for.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

If you think the screens look impressive, just wait till you see it in action. This is currently one of the best-looking titles on any format. The new view, over the shoulder of Leon, works brilliantly and moves the series on from the dramatic camera angles of old. From our time spent with the game we'd say it's shaping up to be the best Resi yet.

EXCITE METER

RESIDENT EVIL 4

SAY BYE TO YOUR BOWELS AND HI TO A NEW BREED OF HORROR

ON: GC PUB: CAPOM OUT: WINTER

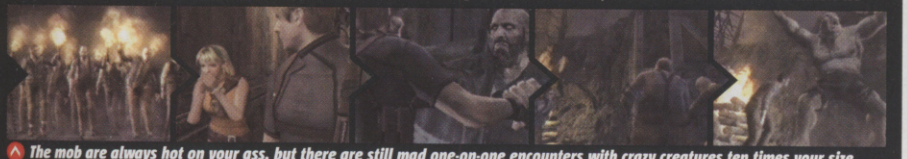
Each time we see Resident Evil 4 in action it gets better and better. The E3 showing of this forthcoming potential masterpiece was no different, surpassing our already high expectations with a spectacular new trailer and playable code on the show floor.

In case you're unfamiliar with the set-up, this time the action takes place in a remote European village. Leon S Kennedy, the rookie cop from Resi 2, is on a top secret mission to locate the President's daughter who has been abducted. As Leon encounters unimaginable horrors, he must find out who or what is behind this new nightmare.

One thing's for certain from what we saw at E3 – the new direction for the series, namely, removing the zombies, looks to be a wise move. The crazed villagers show greater AI than the brain-dead body munchers of old. There's more variety to the gameplay, with Leon now able to swim and in one section pilot a small boat. Plus the creatures and scares that lie ahead could be the greatest the series has seen.

The terror hits GameCube early next year. Start filing down your nails in preparation!

You've got to protect the President's daughter and help her through sinister scenarios, similar to the action in Ps2 classic Ico



The mob are always hot on your ass, but there are still mad one-on-one encounters with crazy creatures ten times your size

Leon finds himself in a tight spot, but gets in a quick life-saving stab

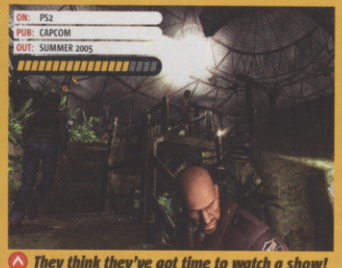
Capcom revealed a load of new enemies including these barmy monks

You get to use stacks of new weapons including a wicked sniper rifle

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK FILE NO.2

The horror isn't confined to the GameCube. Next summer PS2 owners will be treated to another instalment in the Outbreak series.

The big news from E3 is that Capcom will shortly announce online support for the title in Europe (c'mon lads, make your minds up)! Here's an all-new screen till then.



They think they've got time to watch a show!

Demitri from Dark Stalkers vs dragon-assed Hauzer from little known title Warzard

ON: PS2 PUB: CAPCOM OUT: WINTER

CAPCOM FIGHTING Jam

STREET FIGHTERS RETURN IN THE MOTHER OF ALL 2D BATTLES

With Capcom being the pre-eminent creator of 2D beat 'em ups over the last 15 years, it was inevitable that one day they'd think about merging their history of fighters into the ultimate brawler. Now they've done it, and this is it.

Capcom Fighting Jam for PlayStation 2 features characters from Street Fighter II, DarkStalkers, Street Fighter III, Red Earth and Street Fighter Alpha. The confirmed characters so far are Ryu and Guile from SF II, Demitri and Felicia from DarkStalkers, Yun and Chun-Li from SF III, Leo and Hauzer from Red Earth and Guy and Sakura from SF Alpha.

Each character maintains a unique fighting style from their respective title, so you'll have to strategically use each one's combat system to defeat your opponent.

The backgrounds are more detailed than the fighters!

Leo from Red Earth isn't a character we were hoping for

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

This is a real no-brainer from Capcom, and the mix of characters revealed so far is also a bit of a let-down – as is the graphical style that seems to take the original art from each title. We're sure Capcom fans will lap this up, but is this as earth-shattering as either the Marvel Vs Capcom or Capcom Vs SNK series?

Hauzer has a shot at giving Chun-Li a good roasting

Kazunori unveils the finished PSP design for the first time. Cue tidal waves of drool

A trailer for new movie Spider-Man 2 is shown running on PSP – all our hopes are coming ture!

PS PERFECTION!

SONY'S BABY BLOWS OPEN THE HANDHELD MARKET!

Holy crapoli on a bed of shitoli! That was our reaction when we saw PSP running for the first time. Nothing could have prepared us for the breathtaking sight of a smooth-as-camouflaged-velvet Snake high-kicking a guard in the chops or a Ford GT screaming through beautifully-rendered Gran Turismo streets.

The final design is a little different from the concept images Sony released in February, but PSP still looks proper delicious. The massive four and a half inch (measured diagonally) widescreen display dominates the front of the machine, ensuring you won't EVER have to squint to see an attacking enemy or a sharp corner.

Multiplayer is made possible by wireless LAN connections, so you can challenge a total stranger to a Pro Evo match wherever and whenever you want! You can also transfer data via this method, so you could share unlockables or saved games with your mates at the touch of a button!

But here's the sweet thing: PSP is not just a games machine! PSP runs off UMDs (Universal Media Discs) which can hold up to 1.8 GB (that's just under half the maximum info held on an average PS2 disc) of game data, movie footage or audio info! On top of that, several accessories have been confirmed, like a mic, a prototype digital camera and a keyboard! Seems Sony wants to make PSP as versatile as possible.

It's going to be THE iPod-style fashion accessory of next year. Let's put it this way: we want one NOW, and we're confident you'll go gaga for one too!

PSP TECH SPECS WE DON'T UNDERSTAND HALF OF IT, BUT HERE YA GO

- Dimensions: 170 mm (L) x 74 mm (W) x 23 mm (D)
- Weight: 260 g
- CPU: PSP CPU
- (System clock frequency 1~333MHz)
- Main Memory: 32MB
- Embedded DRAM: 4MB

- Display: 4.3 inch, 16:9 widescreen TFT LCD
480 x 272 pixel (16.77 million colors)

- Speakers: Built-in stereo speakers

- Main Input/Output: IEEE 802.11b (Wi-Fi)
- USB 2.0 (Target)
- Memory Stick PRO Duo
IrDA
- IR Remote (SIRCS)

- Main Connectors: DC IN 5V
- Terminals for charging built-in battery
- Headphone/Microphone/Control connector

- Keys/Switches: Directional buttons (Up/Down/Right/Left)
- Analog pad
- Enter keys (Triangle, Circle, Cross, Square)
Left, Right keys
- Start, Select, Home
- Power On/Hold/Off switch
- Brightness control, Sound Mode, Volume +/-
- Wireless LAN On/Off switch
UMD Eject

- Power: Built-in lithium-ion battery, AC adapter
- Access Control: Region Code, Parental Control

- UMD Specifications
Dimensions: Approx. 65 mm (W) x 64 mm (D) x 4.2 mm (H)
Weight: Approx. 10g
Disc Diameter: 60 mm
Maximum Capacity: 1.8GB (Single-sided, dual layer)
Laser wavelength: 660nm (Red laser)
Encryption: AES 128bit
Profile: PSP Game (full function)
UMD Audio (codec ATRAC3plus™, PCM, (MPEG4 AVC))
UMD Video (codec MPEG4 AVC, ATRAC3plus™, Caption PNG)

IT'S OFFICIAL! ACTUAL DESIGNS

Hand Con

We've seen the future of gaming. In fact, we've held it in our hands, and it's simply STUNNING.

Sony's PSP and Nintendo's DS were both finally unveiled at E3 along with a shedload of eye-popping games. CVG was first in the line to get our sweaty mitts all over them and didn't let them go until we could bring you the most in-depth info and the most on-point verdicts on both systems.

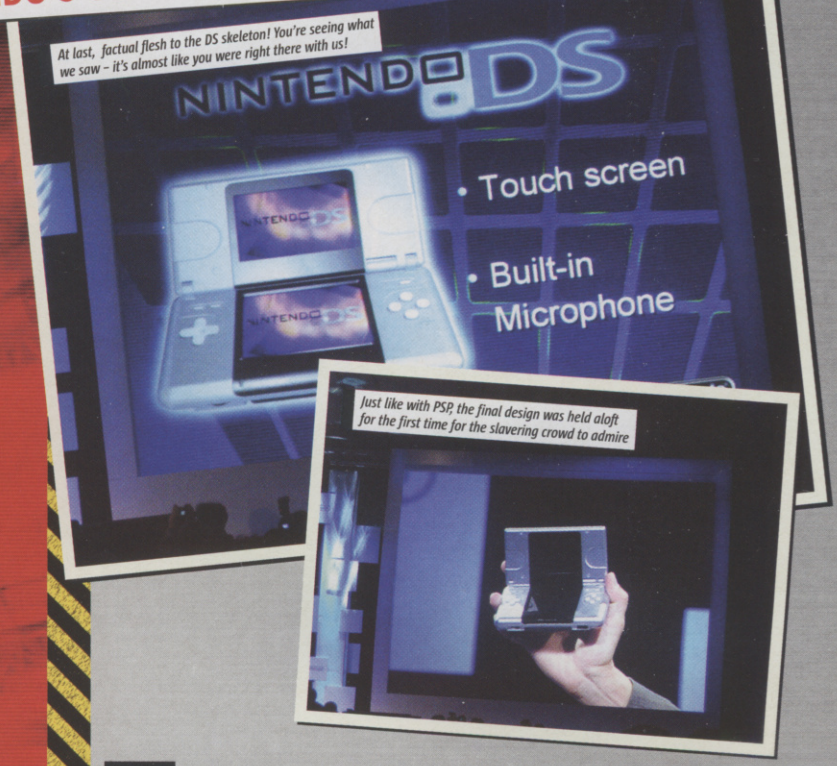
It's PSP versus DS in the handheld heavyweight showdown: let's get it on!

to-Hand nbat

Sony and Nintendo slug it out for the future of handheld gaming! And... Fight!

DUAL-SCREENED DELIGHT!

NINTENDO'S GOLDEN GAMING TOUCH COMES GOOD!



At last, factual flesh to the DS skeleton! You're seeing what we saw – it's almost like you were right there with us!

Just like with PSP, the final design was held aloft for the first time for the slavering crowd to admire

We admit it. We wondered why the hell we need two screens instead of one. We wondered what kind of mentalist was behind the idea. We were wrong. DS is wicked.

Nintendo has pointed out that DS is "all about the games", so don't expect any of rival PSP's multimedia capabilities. But do expect an experience that'll turn your notion of gaming arse-end up.

Graphically it looks great – not as instantly impressive as PSP, but that's mainly because DS's games have more cartoony visuals. Think N64 graphics given a fat injection of GameCube processing power.

So, what about those twin three-inches diagonally screens? Well, rather than using the second screen for dull stuff, it has become apparent that Ninty's been busy dreaming up a whole new way to interact with games.

Using your finger or a stylus (that's like a little plastic pen) you can control characters or objects within the game. In Balloon Trip, we had to draw clouds on the screen to cushion Baby Mario's landing, and in Metroid we used the stylus to control Samus.

Sounds weird? Yeah, but it works! The best thing about it is that it allows developers to create completely fresh gaming experiences. There's even a built-in microphone that reacts to sound, so you might find yourself telling characters what to do!

And multiplayer support? Hell yes! Wireless connectivity is confirmed for hassle-free link-ups, and Nintendo has even mentioned using hotspots so you can link up with gamers across the globe!

We're eating our hats right now.

DS TECH SPECS

NINTENDO HAVEN'T RELEASED A FULL IN-DEPTH SPEC SHEET, BUT TO BE HONEST WE UNDERSTAND THIS LOT MORE ANYWAY

■ Screens
Two backlit 3-inch screens capable of producing full 3D views.
N64 beating visuals will run at 60 fps with details like fog effects and cel-shading.
Lower screen has PDA-style touch-screen capabilities and comes fitted with a tougher film cover for durability. A stylus is included (Woo!).

■ Microphone
Picks up any sound like voice commands and hand-clapping. Allows verbal player interaction and possible wireless internet-facilitated chat. Wicked!

■ Wireless
Nintendo's proprietary communication protocol and IEEE 802.11 wireless network connection for up to 16 players over 30 feet, or unlimited distances at LAN hotspots.

■ Sound
16 channel mono sound.
You'll get stereo sound via the built-in headphone socket.

■ Processing
Two processors: ARM9/ARM7.

Battery & Power Management
Rechargable low-energy-consumption battery.
Sleep mode (pauses game and conserves power).
Standby mode (DS activates when alerted by a friend or nearby user)

■ Media
Thin cards with a capacity of 1 GB.
Second slot for backwards compatibility with GBA cartridges.

SCREEN OF DREAMS

Look at it! It's huge! Four and a half inches from corner to corner is pretty damn big, but PSP's LCD widescreen dominates the front of the machine so much that it looks even bigger.

Honestly, we were blown away by the image quality: they're almost unbelievably crystal clear so both games and movie files look brilliantly high-res!

LINK ME UP

Wires? Man, wires are SO last century. If it's got wires, we don't want to know about it. PSP supports wireless LAN so you can hook up instantly with your mates or anyone else who's brave enough to take you on.

BUTTON IT

The only buttons dropped from PS2's Dual Shock Pad for PSP are R2 and L2 triggers. Every other button rises from the casing like diamond encrusted spots filled with liquid gold pus. As well as all the usual suspects, there are switches to control brightness, volume and turn on/off wireless LAN.

This is what your PSP game pack will look like...

CHECK DISK OUT

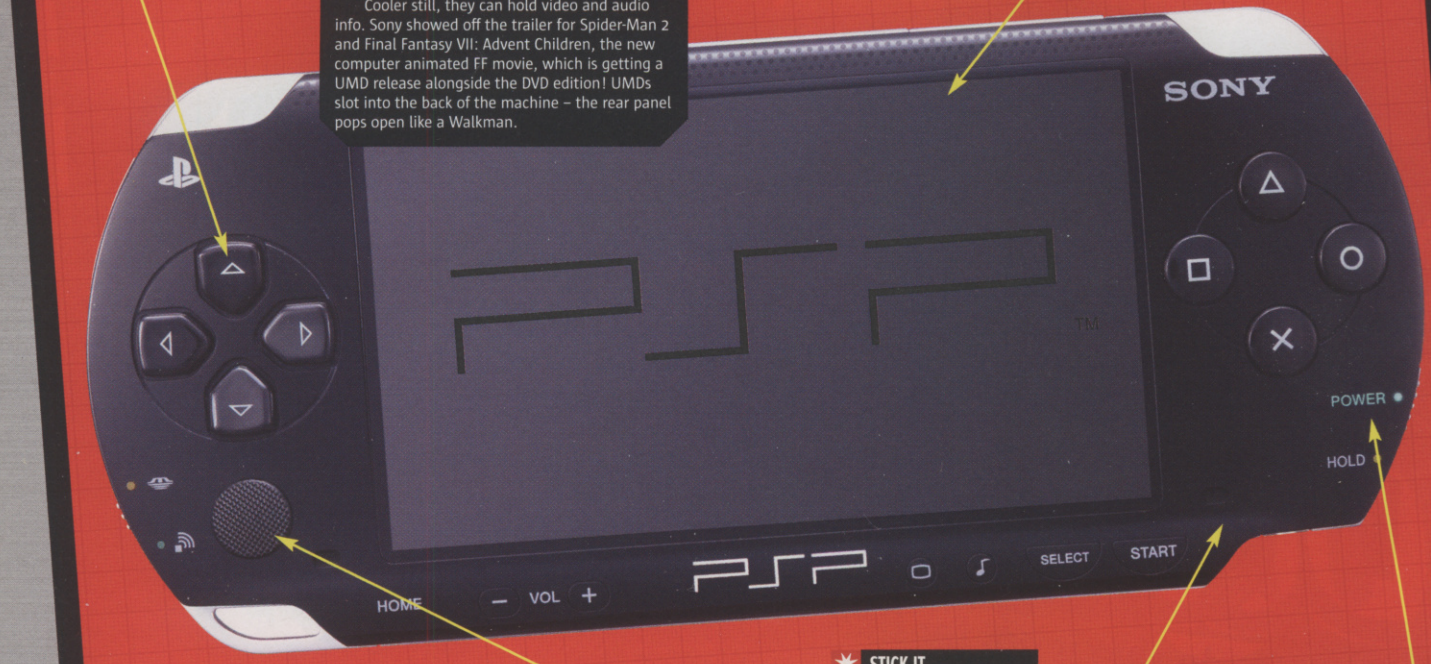
PSP games will come on UMDs. They're little 60mm diameter disks that come in a protective plastic casing, and they can hold up to a whacking 1.8 GB of data.

Cooler still, they can hold video and audio info. Sony showed off the trailer for Spider-Man 2 and Final Fantasy VII: Advent Children, the new computer animated FF movie, which is getting a UMD release alongside the DVD edition! UMDs slot into the back of the machine – the rear panel pops open like a Walkman.

DATA CHECK

You'll be able to save your game data and transfer information via memory cards like mobile phone SIM cards. We've seen 32 MB and 128 MB cards, but Sony manufactures memory sticks with up to 1 GB capacity (that's 125 standard PS2 memory cards!).

The awesome thing is PSP will be compatible with Connect, Sony's online music download service, so you'll be able to snaffle music with your PC or PSP and save it on your memory card! AND! Sony has suggested that movies and even games may be downloadable in the future! Holy monkeys!



STICK IT

When we saw the concept images of PSP one of our first questions was: 'Where the heck's the analog stick?'. Now it's turned up. Coincidence? We doubt it.

It isn't as raised as a PS2 stick – you sort of slide it flat in the direction you want to go.

Hard to explain but it feels nice and it's not too small, but it is a bit close to the D-pad for total comfort. Still, it'll mean driving games and shooters will have the same precision controls as their PS2 big brothers. Pity there's not one on the right hand side, though...

Check it out, even the headphone adapter (with remote control!) is wick!

Once you've chosen, match it up with accessories like this carry strap with built-in headphones!

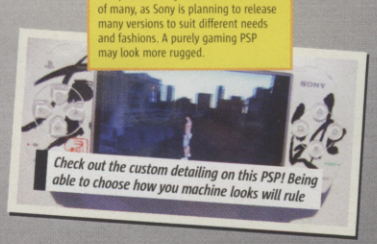
KICKIN' IT PSP STYLE

You know what's really got us excited about PSP? It looks COOL.

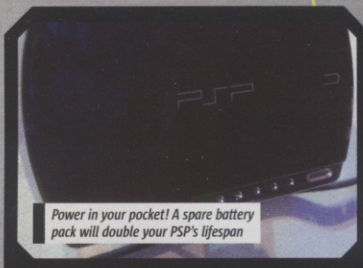
Seriously, look at it. You want one don't you? But it's not just the style that taps into the iPod aspirational market: you'll be able to choose what colour of PSP you want (we've seen black, white, yellow, blue and green) and match it up with some bangin' accessories for some sweet individuality. And if you really want to stand out from the crowd you can get your hands on a custom design, like the silver Jak And Daxter edition!

ONE DESIGN OF MANY

This particular style of PSP will be one of many, as Sony is planning to release many versions to suit different needs and fashions. A purely gaming PSP may look more rugged.



Check out the custom detailing on this PSP! Being able to choose how you machine looks will rule



Power in your pocket! A spare battery pack will double your PSP's lifespan

POWER UP

The power station at the heart of PSP is a built in lithium-ion battery.

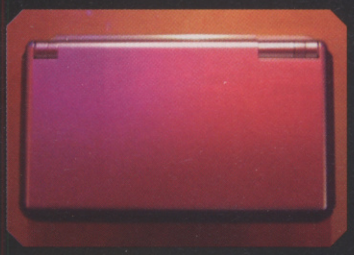
Stick the AC adapter into the socket and the battery automatically fuels up like a mobile phone. You're looking at about ten hours of gameplay, six hours of music playback, and two and a half hours of movie playback fully charged. But don't worry – you'll be able to buy a spare battery pack to keep the PSP power flowing!

DS fits comfortably into your hands and feels a lot like the SP. Love the extra buttons!

TRIGGER HAPPY

DS expands on SP's controls by adding X and Y buttons to the standard A, B, L and R setup.

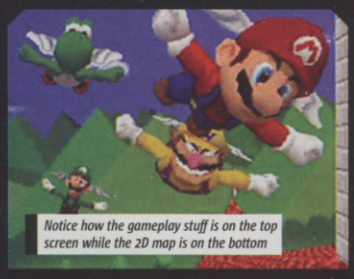
The shoulder buttons are circular switches on the top corners, but we're a bit worried they might be too easy to press by mistake.



CLAMMING UP

DS uses the same clamshell design as the GBA SP, so both screens are protected on those rare occasions when you're not playing.

The top section is much thinner and we were surprised at how stylish the closed DS looks.

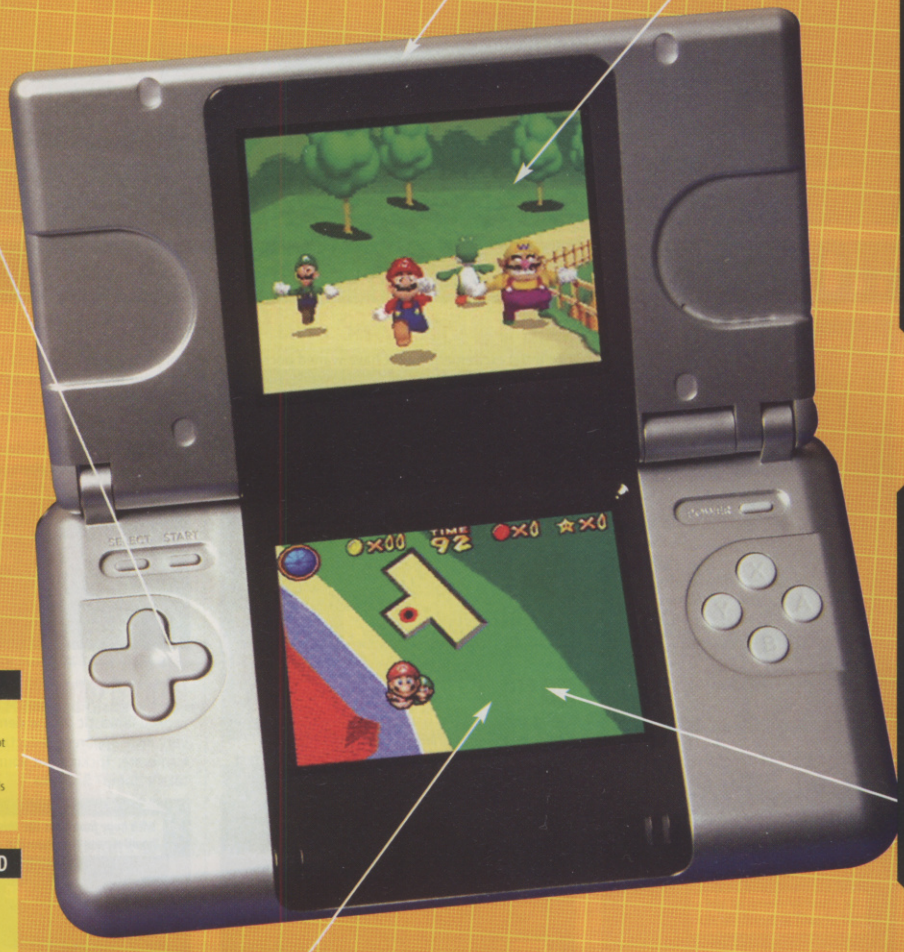


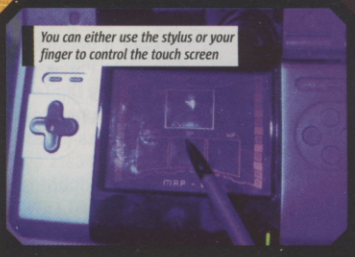
Notice how the gameplay stuff is on the top screen while the 2D map is on the bottom

UP TOP SCREEN

The top LCD screen measures three inches diagonally (same as a GBA SP), is back-lit (like GBA SP) and displays sexy 3D images (that make a GBA SP look more out of date than Caprice).

This is the main gameplay screen where you'll see your character and the game world, and we've seen some games that use both screens together. Seeing a character disappear from the bottom screen and wander into the top one is a real head trip!





You can either use the stylus or your finger to control the touch screen

KEEPIN' CONTROL

DS has no analog stick, but the touch screen could be used in a similar sort of way.

In fact, DS is probably a better set up for first-person shooters, since you could use the D-pad to move and strafe, and look around by moving your finger on the touch screen!

WOT, NO WIRES?

See your GBA link-up cable? Chuck it out. With DS you can hook up with other DS users via wireless LAN. It's got a range of 30 feet but Ninty has mentioned setting up global hotspots where you could play against DS-heads thousands of miles away and even chat to them on your DS!

CARTRIDGE RELOADED

Chuck away your GBA link cable, but don't chuck the games! As well as a port for DS games that will come on 1GB capacity cartridges, there'll be another bay for backwards compatibility with GBA games and, excitingly, future add-ons that haven't been announced yet.

Metroid Prime uses the stylus as a second controller. We're worried it'll be impossible unless your DS is bolted down

A stylus comes bundled with DS. We hope Ninty give us a good place to keep it safe

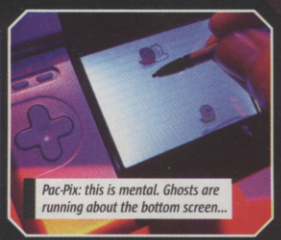
DOWN LOW SCREEN

Here's DS's unique selling point and the reason for all the excitement, cynicism and eventual delight: this screen is the same size as the top screen, but is layered with a tough touch-screen film!

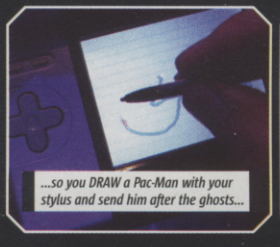
Using a stylus or your finger, you can then interact with the game by touching the screen. It opens the way for loads of weird and wonderful new ways of playing games, as seen in Pac-Pix and Metroid Prime.

But it's useful even when you're not touching it: different views, inventories, replays and maps can all be shown to keep the top screen uncluttered!

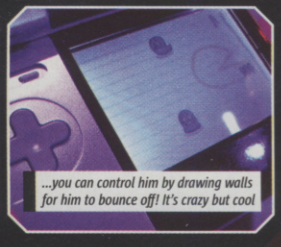
In PictoChat you can send messages and pictures to your mates!



Pac-Pix: this is mental. Ghosts are running about the bottom screen...



...so you DRAW a Pac-Man with your stylus and send him after the ghosts...



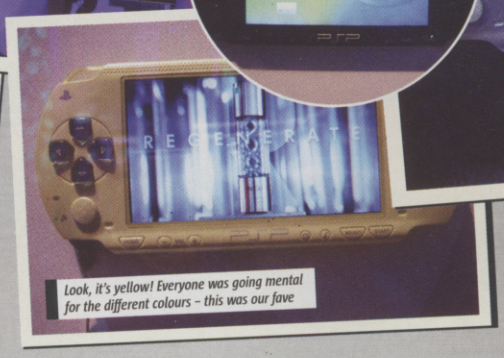
...you can control him by drawing walls for him to bounce off! It's crazy but cool

NEWS SPECIAL

I've got my sweaty paws on a mad tech demo featuring rubber ducks and submarines!

Basketball on the move! Every bit as crisp and fluid as the best b-ballers on PlayStation 2

Namco's new fantasy adventure looks blinding – five years ago we could only dream of this!


Look, it's yellow! Everyone was going mental for the different colours – this was our fave

HANDS-ON PLAY

The moment I got into the PSP enclosure I barged past a Wookie-sized Yank and sprinted over to get hands-on with the machine. It felt amazing – the raised buttons, PS2 style D-pad and comfy see-through shoulder buttons. Plus the funky new analog controller just beneath the D-pad is surprisingly good, though a tad small. But the most astounding part of PSP is the screen. It's bloody HUGE! About three times the size of a GBA screen laid on its side! And the quality of the picture is out of this world. Metal Gear Acid looked unbelievable – honestly as good as MGS2 on PS2. It's such a stylish and desirable piece of kit. A PSP is about a hundred times cooler than an iPod!

EXCITE METER

PSP: THE GAMES

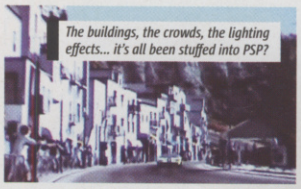
PSP SHOW STOPPERS

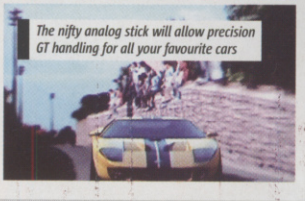
THE PICK OF THE PUKKA PSP GAMES

GRAN TURISMO 4: MOBILE

This was one of the surprises of the show. Seeing it running for the first time was like having your pants pulled down and your balls tugged, but in a nice way. It doesn't make sense, but GT4 is coming to PSP, and according to developers Polyphony Digital it's 'not at all inferior to its PS2 counterpart'.

Okay, so we're taking that with a pinch of the salty stuff. 50 tracks and 500 cars crammed onto a 1.8 GB UMD? We doubt it. But judging by the sheer beauty of GT4 running on PSP we'll still be busting our nuts over a slightly cutback version.

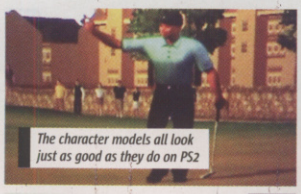

The buildings, the crowds, the lighting effects... it's all been stuffed into PSP?

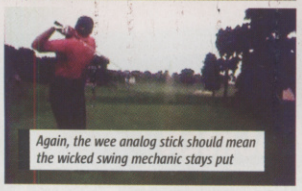

The nifty analog stick will allow precision GT handling for all your favourite cars

TIGER WOODS PGA PRO TOUR

Taking on the Tiger on PSP has got us all practising our analog swings in preparation for some wireless golfing.

Having Tiger on a portable machine is an awesome proposition: sneaking in a quick nine holes before work or leisurely strolling around St Andrews as you sit on the train is our idea of stick and ball heaven. But it's the wireless possibilities that've really got us dribbling. How about a quick game of skins with that bloke sitting on the other side of the bus? Golf skins, obviously. Getting naked would be plain weird...

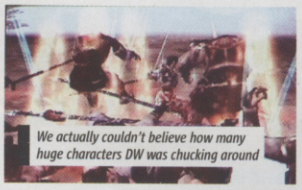

The character models all look just as good as they do on PS2

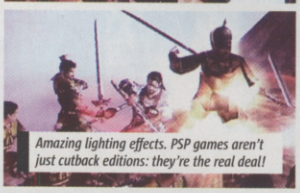

Again, the wee analog stick should mean the wicked swing mechanic stays put

DYNASTY WARRIORS

We're huge fans of KOEI's hack 'n' slasher on PS2 – it puts the fun (and the blood) into Japanese history.

While it's probably not the biggest franchise on PSP, we were so impressed with the way it looks we thought it was worth picking out. In the footage we saw swords fly, blood sprays, and whole crowds of enemies flail through the air as dazzling light effects spray for the screen. The PSP doesn't even stutter. It handles it all with the quiet efficiency of a Samurai. Now that's impressive.

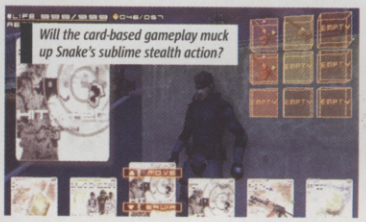

We actually couldn't believe how many huge characters DW was chucking around


Amazing lighting effects. PSP games aren't just cutback editions: they're the real deal!

THE FULL PSP LINE-UP

METAL GEAR AC!D

Our intial excitement might have waned once we realised this is a card-based tactical game, but it's still going to be one of the hottest titles at PSP's launch. Check out our first look on page 10.


Will the card-based gameplay muck up Snake's sublime stealth action?

THIS IS FOOTBALL

Sony's two-left-footed PS2 non-league footie game ain't our fave but at least the PSP version shows that Pro Evo is certainly not an impossibility on the system. The crowd goes wild...

The beautiful game playing on the beautiful handheld system. We love it

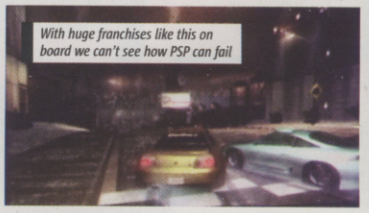
NBA STREET

Living proof PSP can handle fast-paced sports games like Kobe Bryant handles a b-ball. NBA Street's quick, stylish and attitude-packed action is perfect for PSP, and NFL Street will rush the system too.

Six huge characters moving at breakneck speed around PSP's massive screen: lovely

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

Looked fantastic on the demo we saw, with very little apparent reduction in detail, speed, or framerate. Tricking out your Skyline while you take a dump? Booyaka.


With huge franchises like this on board we can't see how PSP can fail

TONY HAWK PRO SKATER

We were pissed off with THUG, so it was a cool surprise to see how tasty this new Hawk moved. Looks like it'll have comedy THUG-style missions like using lawnmowers as boards. You know, gnarly.

This actually looks like a full version of THUG 2, which we'll be looking at soon

WIPEOUT PURE

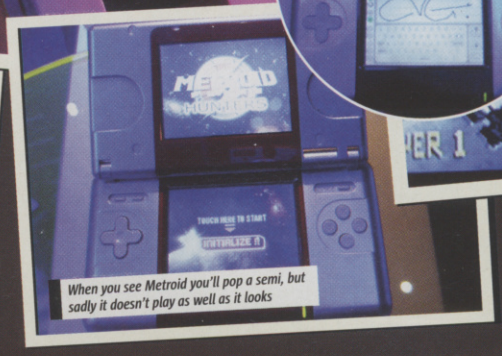
And if NFS: Underground's not speedy enough for ya then strap yourself into Sony's futuristic racing series, updated for the PSP. Three words came to mind when we saw it moving: fast, fast, fast!

Super fast 3D visuals twinned with thumping techno, all on a handheld machine

- Ridge Racer
- Fighting Spirits
- Everybody's Golf
- Hard Corps
- Syphon Filter
- NBA Shootout 2005
- WRC
- Dynasty Warriors
- Devil May Cry
- Viewtiful Joe
- Vampire Chronicle
- Tokyo Xtreme Racer
- Puyo Puyo Fever
- Ape Escape
- Hot Shots Golf
- Puzzle Bobble
- NFL Street
- F1 04
- MediEvil
- Tiger Woods
- Twisted Metal: World Tour

This was the first time that I got hands-on with DS, and I didn't let go for a good few hours

The whole dual-screen thing is blinding and the touch-screen takes gaming to a new place


When you see Metroid you'll pop a semi, but sadly it doesn't play as well as it looks

I took this photo of Metroid up and running. It's almost as good-looking as it is on Cube

What impressed me most was how well the touch-screen works. It's so instant and feels dead natural. Playing Wario Ware was unbelievably brilliant. Especially the fruit-slicing mini-game – different fruits fly though the air and you have to drag the stylus across them mid-flight in a cutting motion. However, the Metroid Prime game, which looks phenomenal, didn't work so well. It's a wicked concept, but using the D-pad and the stylus at the same time feels uncomfortable. I played all the games, and most of them feel utterly fresh, but my real worry is that third-party developers won't be willing to spend the time or money on exploring the full capabilities of touch-screen-based games.

EXCITE METER

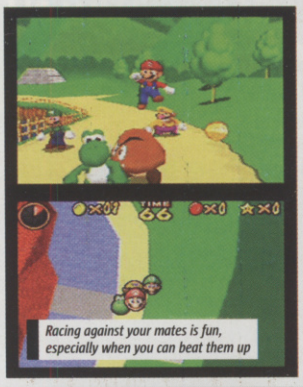
DS SHOW STOPPERS

DS GAMES THAT'LL LEAVE YOUR PALMS SMOKING!

SUPER MARIO 64 X 4

Shows off the 3D capabilities of the DS. It's the first level from the classic N64 game shrunk down and stuffed inside DS, then injected with multiplayer madness.

Up to four players race around maps from the original nicking hidden stars. If another player has a star you can knock it out of their hands with Mario Kart-style attacks, so games descend into hilarious tit-for-tat battles. It's fast, funny fun for four players, but there doesn't seem to be much else to do. Might work best as an add-on to a proper new 3D Mario game.


Racing against your mates is fun, especially when you can beat them up

METROID PRIME: HUNTERS

Another multiplayer game, Hunters sticks you and three other Samus Aran's in an arena and lets you get it on. It's only a multiplayer battle mode at the mo, but hopefully it'll evolve into a full epic.

The lower screen is a kind of control panel – you use the stylus to look around on the top screen (like using the right analog stick on Cube or PS2), hit the screen to fire your weapons, and tap an icon to shift into the Morph Ball. Sounds complicated, and it does feel a bit clumsy unless you've got the DS resting on a table.

Again, this feels more like a multiplayer mode than a standalone game

WARIO WARE, INC. DS

Doesn't look much more attractive than the GBA version, but the important thing about this is that it uses the touch screen in countless interesting and often pant-pissingly funny ways.

We were using the stylus to scratch Wario's itchy back, rubbing coins through a bit of paper, shepherding sheep... you know the score, it's crazy stuff. With multiplayer modes in-built this seemed like the most complete DS game. The touch screen stuff adds a whole new dimension of fun to the ultra-fast mini games.

You can't beat a bit of Wario Ware for proper craziness. Rub, dammit, rub!

THE FULL DS LINE-UP

MARIO KART DS

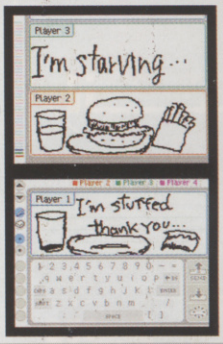
Not playable at the show, but a video showed the usual characters racing around the Yoshi's Island track from Double Dash!! in old-school single-seater karts. Verdict? DS will easily handle an ace Mario Kart game. Race positions are constantly updated in the lower screen.

SUPER MARIO BROS. DS

Shamelessly old school side-scrolling Mario antics. Right now the bottom screen isn't used for anything. The characters are fricking HUGE, and Mario can grow bigger than ever before by eating super-duper Mushrooms!

PICTOCHAT

Not really a game, but a nifty little communication program for sending messages and drawings over a wireless LAN. Send your mate a picture of a willy and tell him he's a nobhead. That's what we'll be doing, anyway. Could allow global DS communities to flourish.



BALLOON TRIP

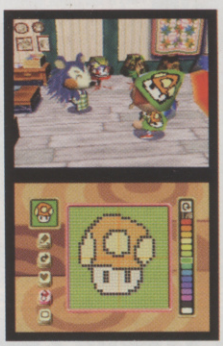
This is really just a tech demo to show off DS's funky touch screen technology, but we had so much fun with it that we'd love to see it as a bonus game. You have to protect Baby Mario from a fall by drawing fluffy clouds for him to land on. Strangely relaxing.

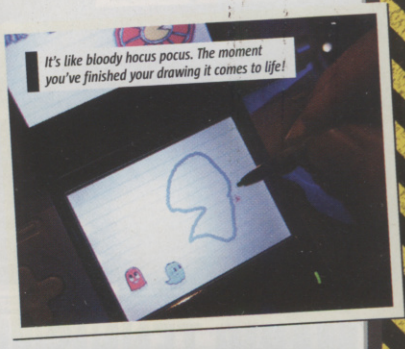
PAC-PIX

Absolute touch-screen madness. You've got to draw a Pac-Man who then comes to life and eats ghosts. Obviously. Another demo of how cool the touch-screen drawing stuff is, we were especially impressed with the way your Pac-Man kept his shape – so if you make him look like the Elephant Man, then he'll go chomping in that shape!

ANIMAL CROSSING DS

DS version of the fantastic Cube game that's only just got a UK release date. Works better on a portable system as it plays in real-time like a sort of object hoarding Harvest Moon. Plus, DS's wireless link-up will let you trade objects with pals.




It's like bloody hocus pocus. The moment you've finished your drawing it comes to life!

- Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles
- Viewtiful Joe
- Need For Speed
- Dynasty Warriors
- Carving
- Mario's Face
- DS Pikachu
- Submarine
- Mobile Suit Gundam Seed
- Bomberman
- Yu-Gi-Oh!
- Pac 'n Roll
- Sonic DS
- Egg Monster Heroes
- Spider-Man 2
- Dragonball Z
- Mega Man Battle Network
- Mr Driller
- Dragon Quest Monsters
- Monster Rancher
- Rayman DS

A fiery foe for Link to face. Wonder what this boss's weak spot will be?

SHOW SHOCKER

Wind Waker was cool, but the cartoon graphics couldn't make a forest look as stunningly beautiful as this

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

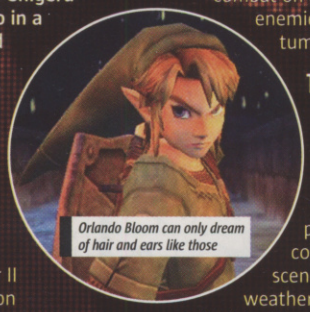
LINK DITCHES THE CARTOON WORLD FOR HIS LATEST ADVENTURE

ON: GC PUB: NINTENDO OUT: 2005

Footage of Link's next adventure on GameCube stunned everyone at E3 – it's unveiling caused grown men to cheer, and when Zelda creator Shigeru Miyamoto appeared after the video in a puff of smoke carrying Link's sword and shield, some of those grown men even cried! But enough of the smoke and mirrors: what about the game?

Currently going by the working title of Legend Of Zelda and built using the Wind Waker engine, the new Zelda isn't a remake of any sort but a brand new game. Link looks similar to his Soul Calibur II incarnation and although the cartoon styling of Wind Waker is gone, Link is still meant to be a teenager.

Set in the land of Hyrule, Zelda features lots of horseback riding. Nintendo says this will be a key component of gameplay. They'll be like Ocarina Of Time's horse sections, and replace Wind Waker's boat bits as a way of getting around. There's also combat on horseback, with Link able to knock enemies off their steeds, sending them tumbling to the ground.

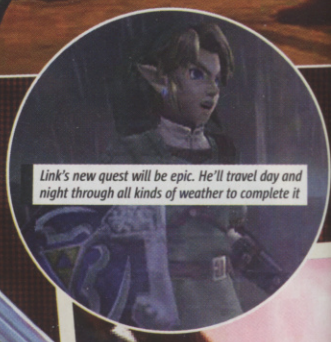


Orlando Bloom can only dream of hair and ears like those

THE DARKEST LINK

The eye-tracking system of Wind Waker is carried across to the new adventure. From the footage shown it's also evident that this will be much darker in tone to previous instalments. The trailer conjures up plenty of atmospheric scenes, including some dynamic weather effects and menacing enemies.

Scheduled for a 2005 release and produced by Shigeru Miyamoto, this game has us all foaming at the mouth. We'll bring you more on Zelda as soon as Nintendo lets us!



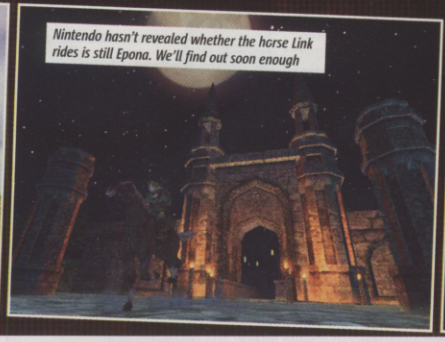
Link's new quest will be epic. He'll travel day and night through all kinds of weather to complete it

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Although we eventually learned to love the cartoon style of Wind Waker, our hearts are beating wildly for a return to realism in the Zelda series. The trailer for the new Zelda was one of THE highlights of E3 this year. 2005 can't come quickly enough.

EXCITE METER

Link faces opponents racing on wild boars and armed with longbows. This'll be fun!



Nintendo hasn't revealed whether the horse Link rides is still Epona. We'll find out soon enough

The visual style may be different, but you can expect the usual amount of smart puzzles

HOT SHOT

MARIO TENNIS

IT'S-A NEW BALLS, PLEASE

Mario and his Mushroom Kingdom pals are back for some game, set and match action.

Each character is armed with some insane special moves, so you'll have to pick your partners carefully. Donkey Kong and Bowser can hit fiercely fast returns, while Luigi is something of a defensive master.

MARIO PINBALL

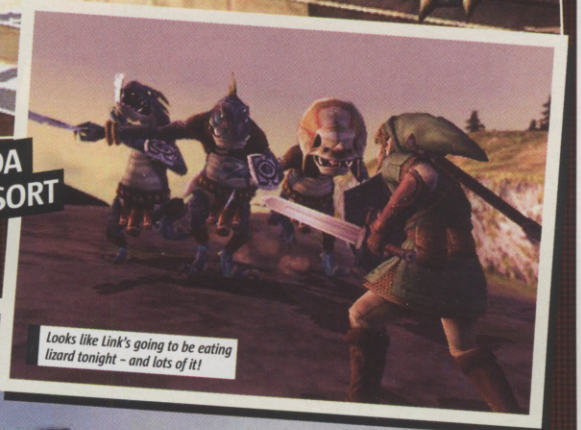
IT'S-A ME, I'M A PINBALL

Bowser has kidnapped Peach again and escaped to another dimension.

A scientist has used his Spherifier to transform Mario into a ball, firing him after the fiend with his Super Cannon. So begins Mario's foray into the pinball realm – seems he's working himself harder than Pokémon.

Link faced off against these guys in Wind Waker, but it looks a lot more dynamic here

"THE NEW LEGEND OF ZELDA ISN'T A REMAKE OF ANY SORT BUT A BRAND NEW GAME"



Looks like Link's going to be eating lizard tonight – and lots of it!

Link gets into the thick of the action. He may be outnumbered, but never outgunned

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA® The Minish Cap

THANK THE MAKER – NOT JUST ONE NEW ZELDA, BUT TWO!

ON: GBA **PUB:** NINTENDO **OUT:** 2005

With the new GC Zelda looking like a return to the realism of the N64 adventures, long-time fans of the series will be delighted with this brand new 2D Zelda game for the GBA.

In case the name doesn't give away what awaits Link, let us expand further. Searching for magical fragmented relics called Kinstones, Link will have to keep a close eye on what lies under his feet. Using the power of a mystical hat called the Minish Cap, Link can shrink down to microscopic size in order to help the Minish people: a miniature race in need of a hero.

Supporting up to four players and scheduled for release next year, it seems that our favourite adventurer is going to have a busy 2005.

Fuse Kinstone pieces together to solve puzzles and unlock secrets

There'll be tons of enemies and the usual inventive boss to batter

Link's talking to a Minisher – look how big that boot is!

Er, not wanting to be party poopers or anything but anyone remember Four Sword's Gnat Hat?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Nintendo do the double, announcing not only a new Cube Zelda, but this baby too – proving they haven't forgotten the fans that have embraced Zelda on GBA. Minish Cap may be a strange-sounding name but the gameplay sounds like classic Zelda. We can't wait to go mini and spend some more time with this.

EXCITE METER

MARIO PARTY ADVANCE

IT'S-A MY PARTY... BALLS!

The GBA is set for a portable party with Mario and his pals, boasting 60 mini-games and a host of Professor E Gadd's incredible Gaddgets.

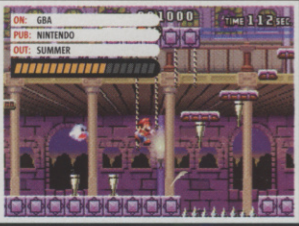
Playing the single-player game-boards earns you coins that can be used to purchase Gaddgets such as a Finger X-Ray, or a Compatibility Meter to test friendships.

MARIO VS DONKEY KONG

IT'S-A ME AND HAIRY BALLS

A new hybrid platformer for Mario. The little guy must take on his old nemesis Donkey Kong, who's run off with a bunch of Mario toys. Mean!

Our favourite plumber sets off through six worlds on a quest to retrieve the toys. Armed with new moves such as the handstand and hammer-throw, Mario means business.



"A race-tuned graphical piece of grit-churning delight."

- ComputerAndVideoGames.com

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Flames AND blood! And yeah, that is the poor bloke's arm spinning through the air!

Every swing and blow feels like it's got real muscle behind it. And you can chop dudes up!

You'll need to please the crowd with stylish kills and WWE-style posturing

ON: PS2 PUBLISHER: CAPCOM OUT: EARLY 2005

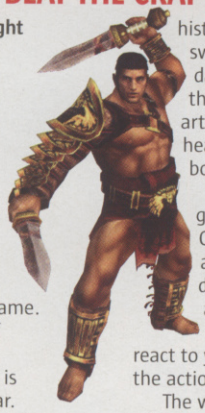
SHADOW OF ROME

WHEN IN ROME... BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF EVERYONE!

Remember the fight scenes from Gladiator? Big dudes swinging swords and maces at each other as blood sprayed across the sun-baked sand and the crowd flipped out. Now that'd be a cool game.

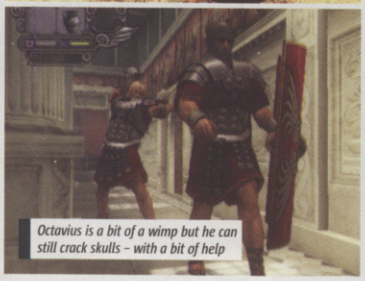
Capcom must've been thinking the same thing! Shadow Of Rome is looking like the ultimate gladiator game. The storyline is a nice mix of history and fiction, with you seeking to prove your father is innocent of murdering Caesar.

You're Agrippa, a hard-as-nails soldier, who must return to Rome and become a gladiator to save your father from execution. Cue loads of arena-based skull cracking with historically accurate weapons like swords, maces and tridents. The damage they do is accurate too – this game sprays blood like an arterial wound. Limbs drop off, heads roll in the sand, and whole bodies get SLICED APART! Yes!



But it's not all blood and guts. You'll also play as Octavius, who must use stealth and cunning to prove Agrippa's dad is innocent. The sneaky bits aren't quite as satisfying as the fighting, but the game will react to your style of play and feed you the action you prefer.

The whole thing runs on an advanced version of the Onimusha 3 engine, complete with a fully moveable camera. Plus Keiji Inafune, hot-shot producer of the first Onimusha and Resi 2 is in charge, so we can expect a quality product dripping with class.

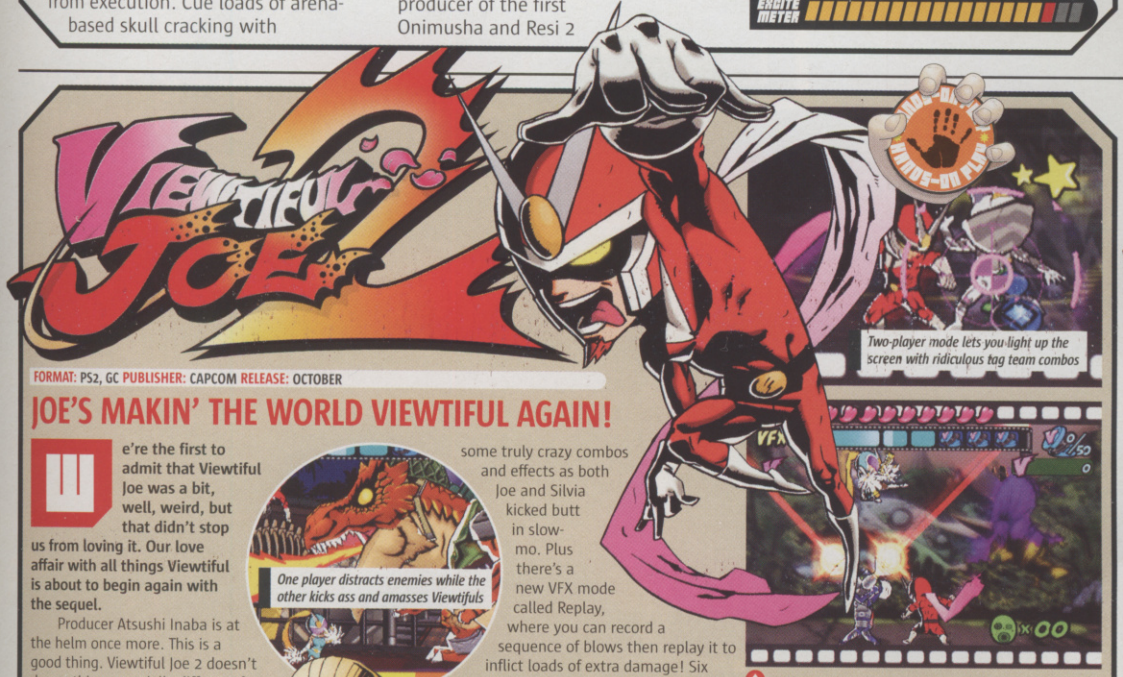

Octavius is a bit of a wimp but he can still crack skulls – with a bit of help

And here's some more cool stuff: a hot female gladiator called Claudia, chariot racing with whips, tigers (yes!) and Gladiator-style cut-scenes. ARE YOU NOT ENTERTAINED?! Shadow Of Rome shall rule.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

First of all, gladiators are cool. You can't deny it. Second, Shadow Of Rome has some of the heaviest and most hard-hitting combat we've ever seen on any console. It really feels like you're slamming a sword against a meaty shield, or mooshing a mace against a fragile skull. It looks slick too, especially when blood's spurting all over the place.

EXCITE METER



FORMAT: PS2, GC PUBLISHER: CAPCOM RELEASE: OCTOBER

JOE'S MAKIN' THE WORLD VIEWTIFUL AGAIN!

We're the first to admit that Viewtiful Joe was a bit, well, weird, but that didn't stop us from loving it. Our love affair with all things Viewtiful is about to begin again with the sequel.

Producer Atsushi Inaba is at the helm once more. This is a good thing. Viewtiful Joe 2 doesn't do anything especially different from its predecessor, but Inaba's guidance has meant that the original formula has been distilled to the point of perfection. The visuals are still cel-shaded, the action is still intricate button-bashy combo based, and Joe's VFX moves still look sweet.

Not that there's nothing new. The biggest addition is a co-op two-player mode. You can both be Joe or choose his hot girlfriend (from the start this time) with her newly-acquired Viewtiful ass-kicking skills. Silvia is a bit quicker than Joe, but packs the same kind of lightning quick punch.

Two-player mode will be well interesting – if one of you uses a VFX power it affects both of you. We saw some truly crazy combos and effects as both Joe and Silvia kicked butt in slow-mo. Plus there's a new VFX mode called Replay, where you can record a sequence of blows then replay it to inflict loads of extra damage! Six Machine, the spaceship Joe flew in the first game, will return with loads more modes like a submarine and a sniper gun.

One player distracts enemies while the other kicks ass and amasses Viewtifuls

What's more, the levels will be more explicitly movie themed like a Jurassic Park-style dinosaur world, and the whole game will be bigger and tougher. Not too different, but then Viewtiful Joe was so original do we really need many changes?

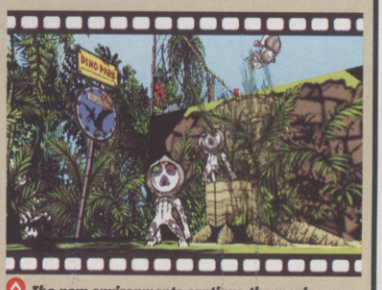
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Same smokin' fast gameplay, same crazily beautiful visuals, same brain-bending puzzles... it's definitely Viewtiful Joe! It's never going to be as fresh as the original but V2 still feels ace to play, and the two-player mode opens up all sorts of fun new experiences. Silvia's moves with her gun are particularly cool, and the Replay VFX is a nice addition.

EXCITE METER

Two-player mode lets you light up the screen with ridiculous tag team combos

We're loving the Replay VFX feature: get it right and you'll inflict triple damage


The new environments continue the movie theme. Can you guess which flick inspired this?

N-GAGE NOT DEAD YET!

"REMEMBER ME?" SOBS IGNORED HANDHELD

Sorry, what were we talking about? Oh yeah, that Nokia thing, what's it called again? Oh, right, N-Gage.

Unperturbed by the announcements of PSP and DS that effectively put the final nail in the system's already spikey coffin, Nokia went ahead and unveiled the 2004 N-Gage line up. To be honest, it's not that bad.

Here's the full list: Pathway To Glory, Pocket Kingdom: Own The World, Ashen, Crash Nitro Kart, The Sims Bustin' Out, Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm, Call Of Duty, Bomberman, Operation Shadow, Requiem Of Hell, Tiger Woods 2004, Driv3r, Civilization, FIFA 2005, SSX Out Of Bounds, Rifts, King Of Fighters, Xanadu Next and Glimmerati.

Some hot titles, and with N-Gage QD's refined styling, maybe it's not dead yet.

Ashen's a wicked looking shooter

Pathway To Glory: real-time strategising

PS2 PRICE PLUMMETS

US PS2 CHEAP AS CHIPS

Sony snuck another nice little announcement in amongst its big guns: they're slashing the retail price of PS2 in the States to $149. Why should you care? Because, at the time of going to press, that equates to about £85, which is a better bargain than getting to boff Britney after buying her some fish and chips.

So is this an indication that PS2s in the UK are about to be reduced? Sony is staying tight-lipped about it for now, but considering how keen it is to extend PS2s life-cycle and get it into the hands of mainstream gamers, we reckon it might not be too far off...

PHANTOM MATERIALISES

AND IT'S 'FREE'. SORTA

At first everyone thought Phantom was a joke, but it's most definitely real and it's looking nice.

It launches Stateside on November 18 and you either pay $200 up front for the system, or take it free and sign a two-year contract, paying $30 a month for the service. It has to be linked up to a broadband connection because you don't buy games on disc or cart – they stream straight from a central server so you can access any game at any time and store them on your 40 GB hard drive.

Sounds nice, but we're a bit sceptical. Surely they'll have to charge you for new titles, making it a bit like cable 'pay-per-view' channels, and since no supporting games have been announced yet we're worried it might be a bit of a dog. No news on UK release yet either, but we'll keep ya posted as usual.

Melee weapons like this Plasma Sword can be lethal if you get too close

ON: XBOX PUB: MICROSOFT OUT: NOV 9

A Warthog slides into action, showing off its impressive new rocket-launcher

HALO 2

THE ACTION HOTS UP WITH A MULTIPLAYER MASSACRE

At E3, the emphasis was on Halo 2's multiplayer genius, and what we saw certainly didn't disappoint.

Bungie showed off an impressive multiplayer level set in Africa called Zanzibar. The level sported a beach, an imposing cliff wall and a man-made fortress that will be difficult to attack.

At the moment Bungie has allowed for up to 16 players in each level, but there's talk of more. Right now the development team is tweaking the game to within an inch of its life and from what we've played, they definitely know what they're doing.

The biggest surprise of the demo was the sheer amount of new features on display, including new tools for online gamers. There will be custom emblem design for armour, for example, which will enable you to make your fighter more easily identifiable.

You can now hold certain weapons in each hand and fire them both independently. The Left trigger operates the weapon in your left hand and the Right trigger fires the weapon in your right – so when dual wielding, you can't throw a grenade or use guns' Alt-Fire mode. More on that in a bit.

BETTER, STRONGER, FASTER

Most of the familiar weapons from the original Halo can be seen in the multiplayer demo, but all of them have been tweaked to enhance their functions and to balance the gameplay. Bungie has also promised a host of new weapons in the final game, but it's staying tight-lipped over exactly what will be included.

What is new is the inclusion of melee weapons. These are for close-quarter combat and include the Elite's Plasma Sword. In the Zanzibar level, the sword is hidden in a massive rotating wheel that is the focal point of the compound. Another interactive element of the level is a drawbridge that can be lowered allowing you to drive vehicles straight into the enemy base!

Bungie also promises new vehicles in the final game, but so far all we've seen are the familiar Warthog and Ghost. One improvement for the Warthog is the addition of a powerful mounted rocket-launcher. It's now also possible to hijack other players' vehicles – but only if they're not travelling at speed or are at a complete stop.

The physics witnessed in the demo are very impressive. Scoring a direct hit with a rocket-launcher aimed at a Warthog causes the vehicle to launch into the air and bounce around the level. Similarly, the damage that can be caused to the environment, particularly man-made constructions, will play a major strategic part in a battle.

Vehicles can also be destroyed through progressive damage. Hit a vehicle hard enough with a powerful weapon and the bodywork will buckle and fall off. Sustaining too much damage will hamper the handling of a vehicle. And if the damage is so heavy that the vehicle won't budge, then you better run for cover as a wrecked Warthog or Ghost will blow up shortly after being totalled.

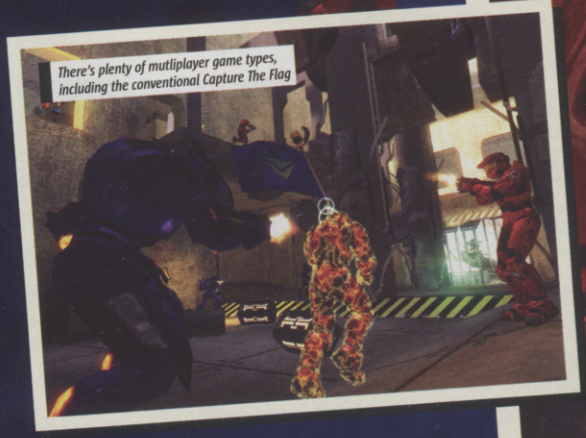
As you can see from the screenshots, Halo 2 is looking like the game we all hoped it would be. Tantalisingly, it plays even better than it looks! You'll be able to find out for yourself when it's released later this year.

Protecting the compound from the enemy onslaught, that beach is full of sitting ducks

"IT'S LOOKING LIKE THE GAME WE ALL HOPED IT WOULD BE, AND IT PLAYS EVEN BETTER THAN IT LOOKS!"

CLOSE COMBAT

Players who get sick of being sniped from a distance can now get into the thick of the action with a handy new melee weapon



There's plenty of mutliplayer game types, including the conventional Capture The Flag

That Elite member has just hopped onto a Ghost and is about to steal the ride

We tried the Ghost's anti-jacking speed boost for ourselves and it rocks, but it's not clear if other vehicles have it too

LOCK-ON WEAPONS

Certain weapons, like the rocket launcher, can lock onto targets. This makes aiming from a distance at a moving target far deadlier

CUSTOM ICONS

You can design your own custom emblems and logos. It's arty, and it means you can identify team members in battle

HOT SHOT

LEVEL DESIGN

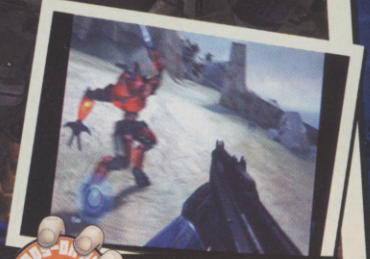
The multiplayer levels vary in size and topography, but they are all suited for non-stop action

VEHICLE DAMAGE

When a vehicle becomes so damaged that it won't operate anymore, you'd better run for cover before it explodes

THE GETAWAY

The Ghost can make a speed boost to get out of a nasty scrape, but you can also use it strategically to your advantage



We blasted it out in a ten-player team-based Capture The Flag game on the new Zanzibar map, and still couldn't believe how gobsmacking it was. Hijacking Warthogs, busting up Elite Covenants with their own swords, using dual weapons, destroying parts of the level! This is the best console shooter ever. Fact!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It ain't just hype. Halo 2 delivers on all its promises and offers Xbox owners a stunningly gorgeous, intense and overwhelming FPS experience. And we haven't even played the single-player campaign yet! The multiplayer is in a world of its own and outclasses all its console competitors. The Halo 2 vs Killzone battle is already over. Halo 2's won!

ENCITE METER

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO

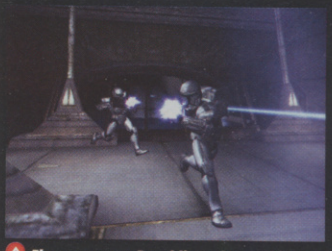
LEAD YOUR OWN ATTACK OF THE CLONES

ON: XBOX, PC PUB: LUCASARTS OUT: Q4 2004

In Star Wars: Republic Commando you lead an elite team of proto-stormtroopers cloned from Jango Fett.

Set at the start of the Clone Wars (between Episode I and Episode II), RC is not your typical squad-based shooter. It's all about action, and faffing about ensuring your men are in the right position is minimised by the intelligence of your troopers, and by the streamlined orders system. The three campaigns and 14-plus missions will take you to places like Genosis (Episode II) and the Wookiee planet of Kashyyyk (which will feature in Episode III), in what could be the best-looking team blaster ever.

Your squad reacts intelligently to things without you having to hold their hands



These guys are Republican clone soldiers. They should be on your side. Stop firing!

You sound like Jango Fett, thanks to the voice of movie cast member Temuera Morrison

You can carry two weapons - one of them is a multi-purpose shooter that can be a rifle, shotgun or grenade-launcher

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Your three-man squad is a well-trained, wily bunch of Kiwi-speaking butt-kickers. They take cover, lay down covering fire, and generally do what you want them to do with minimal effort. Which means the eye-popping action flows fast and furious, making Republic Commando one of the most intuitive and easily grasped squad shooters we've seen.

ENCITE METER

METROID PRIME 2 ECHOES

EVEN BETTER THAN WE EXPECTED!

Intergalactic bounty hunter Samus Aran approaches the world of Aether, investigating a distress signal from a marooned Federation ship. Descending through the planet's atmosphere, an electrical storm disables her vessel, forcing her to crash-land.

Which is unfortunate, as awaiting her are the Ing Horde, the vile inhabitants of 'Dark' Aether, the loathsome alternative dimension in which Aether simultaneously exists. So begins the sequel to what many see as the best actioner on Cube, if not any platform.

The fact that the planet has a Light and a Dark side has all kinds of effects on the gameplay mix of first-person shooting, exploring and platforming. Among the many new power-ups, suit upgrades and weapons to find are Dark and Light beams. You'll have to move between the two domains in your mission to recover your stolen power suit upgrades and thwart the evil Ing Horde's quest to overrun the people of Light Aether, the Luminoth.

The environments are massive, with weird alien-type stuff all over the shop. Samus' visor abilities come into their own in scanning the various lifeforms and technology to reveal clues about what the hell they are.

For the first time there is a multiplayer mode, where up to four players in split-screen can hunt each other down. We're not so sure how well this will work, as Metroid is not exactly an out-and-out shooter, so it may not actually suit deathmatching.

Multiplayer certainly could be pretty inventive

"THE FACT THAT THE PLANET HAS A LIGHT AND A DARK SIDE HAS ALL KIND OF EFFECTS ON GAMEPLAY"

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Overall, Metroid 2 is way more complex than the original. Purely in terms of environmental detail there's so much more to take in, and you just know that hidden among the debris and woven into every intricate structure there are secret routes to exploit. The multiplayer mode works really well, despite worries about the control style. All good!

EXCITE METER

It's not just an all-out blaster. You need to use cover whenever possible to stay alive

KILLZONE

BLOODIER AND BETTER EVERY TIME WE SEE IT

ON: PS2 PUB: SONY OUT: WINTER

While real war ain't much fun and pretty much licks balls all round, videogame war can be as thrilling, adrenalised and gripping an experience you can have.

Killzone is the PS2 shooter that throws you in the deep end of a future war, with the lethal fury of battle in a world that's about as comfortable and welcoming as a hornets' nest.

Two competing factions of mankind are warring over an alien world. There are 26 stages across 11 environments to grimly battle through, with 21 death-dealing shooting irons, together with grenades and heavy weapon emplacements. WWI-style trench warfare, block-to-block urban street fighting, jungle warfare – it's all in there. Online play supports up to 12 players, complete with headsets, and there'll be a bunch of team-based game modes.

Weapons feel wonderfully chunky, recoil wickedly and spit out massive muzzle flashes

There are four types of character classes, including this big-assed heavy gunner

Even though it's gonna be a sure-fire hit, Killzone is still no match for the awesome might of Halo 2

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

E3 was rammed with new PS2 shooters, but none left the crowds buzzing like Killzone. The graphics are astonishing and the AI's on the money, but it seems like the missions might be too linear. You're led by the hand through most of the combat, much like in the Medal Of Honor games. Nonetheless, it's shaping up to be a PS2 classic.

EXCITE METER

TIMESPLITTERS FUTURE PERFECT

IT'S KILLING TIME AGAIN, THIS TIME WITH ADDED CARNAGE

The star of the TimeSplitters series, Cortez, has done his fair share of time travelling and hideous, multi-rectumed alien butt kicking. But it ain't over yet – not by a long shot – as the latest instalment again puts you in the shoes of the heroic hard-nut for an adventure that stretches from 1914 to 2401.

As usual, there'll be the Co-op, Challenge and Arcade modes to complement the one-player Story mode, but this time round there's room for 16-player online deathmatching on PS2 and Xbox.

On your own, there's also the chance to play with an AI-controlled version of yourself – a past and future Cortez fighting side-by-side.

Improved physics, smarter enemies and more detailed environments are also in store, as well as an improved Map Maker to build deathmatch arenas with. Will it be perfect? Only the future will tell.

ON: GC, PS2, XBOX
PUB: EA
OUT: 2005

HANDS-ON PLAY

Better out than in!

The environments look realistic and the special effects spectacular

Improved enemy AI means it's not so easy to take 'em out

Bringing down a chopper on a summer evening has never looked so lovely

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Only a small section of the game was playable at E3, and to be honest it didn't feel much different in terms of gameplay to TimeSplitters 2. It seems that most of the focus has gone into upping the thrills in terms of explosive scenarios and insane conflicts. We're desperate to explore the new multiplayer stuff, because that's where the series shines.

EXCITE METER

HALF-LIFE 2

Whoop! It's Counter-Strike on H-L2's source code – meaning it's NOT Counter-Strike 2. Clear?

IT'S HERE AT LAST... PREPARE FOR THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

Five years in development and counting, but however long it takes, H-L2 will be worth the wait. We saw the latest version at E3 (currently being tweaked and de-bugged for release later this summer) and it's just incredible.

It's going to be one, big sprawling mutha with masses of different locations, from the subjugated cities out to rivers, cliffs and forests. You're going to need the many drivable vehicles such as buggies and hovercraft just to get around. There are squad-based sections in the single-player game, and the multiplayer will be Counter-Strike – only with the best graphics you've ever seen! Plus, there's even talk of a PS2 version. Could this be as good as we hoped it would be? Not 'arf.

COUNTER-STRIKE MAKE-OVER

Valve sprung a neat surprise on us at E3 – Counter-Strike running on the Half-Life source code. Not to be mistaken for the number one online shooter's true sequel, this was just meant to impress us with what the code could do with stuff like collision physics. And impress us it did. We'd still rather have seen Counter-Strike 2, mind.

HANDS-ON PLAY

You can do this human shield move too

You'll run into old favourites, including Odd Job. He's mega hard

EA is honing the game so that aiming and shooting mechanisms are spot on

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC PUB: EA BIG OUT: SEPTEMBER

GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT

BE THE BAD GUY IN EA'S LATEST BOND SHOOTER

Okay, so it's not from the same people as the classic N64 shooter, but this Bond-based blaster is looking pretty damn fine all the same. The cool twist is that you play a bad guy – a 00 agent who's gone off the rails and hooked up with tubby villain Goldfinger.

And like any good actor, you've got to play the part by being as dirty, devious and deadly as any Bond baddie. Breaking necks, using hostages as human shields, wasting whoever gets in your way – it's all in a day's work for a Rogue Agent.

To achieve your goals of assassination, sabotage and revenge you'll carry two guns at any given time, as well as grenades and your upgradable synthetic eye implant. Oh yeah, it turns out your character was wounded by the villainous Dr No and lost one eye. With its solid-looking action, this could be one of the better Bond games we've seen in a while.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It's come as a bit of a shocker that you seemingly kill Bond and play as a baddie with a golden eye. It sounds like a daft twist to the 007 series, and it is. That said, it turns out to be one of the most original and exciting encounters since the N64 classic. It's got clever ideas and gameplay mechanics peppered throughout. Can't wait for another play.

EXCITE METER

The darkness does add tension, but it's much cooler when you can see your enemy

Say hello to the Brothers Grim! The character design is totally solid

ON: XBOX PUB: ACTIVISION OUT: SUMMER 2004

DOOM 3

SHAME YOU AIN'T GOT NO NIGHT VISION GOGGLES

Doom 3 looks absolutely amazing... when you're not bumbling blindly about in complete darkness.

The visuals and game physics are spectacular but the gameplay's a bit weird – it seems that you only have the use of one arm. What's that about?

You have to carry a torch and fire your gun with the same hand, which means that you can't hold both at the same time. So it's a case of flick on torch, locate monster, flick off torch, shoot monster, flick on torch and see if he's dead, he's not, flick off torch shoot monster, flick on torch, where's he gone? Oh, his body's disappeared! We were expecting to be shocked and surprised by Doom 3, only not in this way.

HANDS-ON PLAY

It was running at a choppy frame-rate when we got hands-on

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We only got a brief snapshot of what Doom 3's single-player game has to offer, and sadly we weren't as thrilled as we hoped we'd be. The graphics really are as good as they look in the screenshots, but the gameplay's definitely a bit odd to say the least. If they don't sort it out it could end up being just frustrating, not frightening.

EXCITE METER

VIDEOGAME OVERLOAD!

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW ABOUT EVERY NEW GAME!

NEWS SPECIAL

Mike's eyes nearly popped out of his skull as he walked around the E3 show floor because there were **just so many cool new games to check out!**

Luckily for you guys though, he glued them back in to bring you screens and info on every game coming your way this year. So you've already loaded up on info about some of the other hotties elsewhere in this issue, now clear your brain and prepare to take in this lot.

Then, when you're done, flick to page 46 because we've got another lot of quickfire games you just have to check out. Waddaya waiting for: start gawping!

ACE COMBAT 5

Sharp-looking dogfighter with some of the world's hottest jets

ON: PS2
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: WINTER

ADVENT RISING

Unreal-driven first- and third-person Halo wannabe

ON: XBOX, PC
PUB: MAJESCO
OUT: WINTER

ALTERED BEAST

Mighty morphing beat 'em up with mint-looking monsters

ON: PS2
PUB: SEGA
OUT: SPRING 2005

AMAZING ISLAND

Rear a pet monster, then stick him on your GBA and battle a mate

ON: GAMECUBE
PUB: SEGA
OUT: TBC

BATTLEFIELD 2

Bigger, better, modern-day full sequel to EA's online war series

ON: PC
PUB: EA
OUT: SPRING 2005

BATTLEFIELD MODERN COMBAT

Ambitious PS2 shooter boasting huge 24-player online battles!

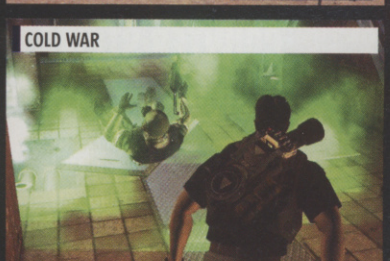
ON: PS2
PUB: EA
OUT: WINTER

BC

Third-person action adventure that mixes combat and strategy

ON: XBOX
PUB: MICROSOFT
OUT: 2005

COLD WAR



Stealthy actioner where you have to escape from the Soviet army

ON: PC
PUB: DREAMCATCHER
OUT: WINTER

COLD WINTER

Spy-based FPS with 13 levels and an advanced gore system. Yikes!

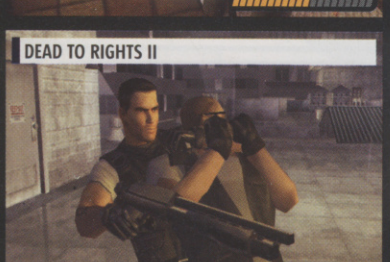
ON: PS2
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: WINTER

COLIN MCRAE 2005

More of the same classic rallying, but now with added online modes

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: CODEMASTERS
OUT: AUTUMN

DEAD TO RIGHTS II



Gritty action-heavy blaster starring one man and his dog

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: AUTUMN

DEATH BY DEGREES

Tekken's Nina Williams goes for her guns in this sprawling actioner

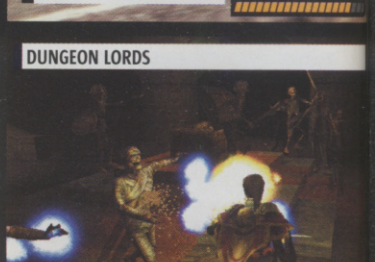
ON: PS2
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: OCTOBER

DRAGON BALL Z: SUPERSONIC WARRIORS

2D fighter featuring all your DBZ faves slugging it out in mid-air

ON: GBA
PUB: ATARI
OUT: AUGUST

DUNGEON LORDS



Hack monsters and cast spells in this FPS-controlled role-player

ON: PC
PUB: DREAMCATCHER
OUT: WINTER

FABLE

RPG where your actions actually affect how the character plays

ON: XBOX
PUB: MICROSOFT
OUT: SEPTEMBER

FIFA FOOTBALL 2005

Improved on-the-ball play and, as ever, first class presentation. Nice!

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC, GBA
PUB: EA
OUT: OCTOBER

FLATOUT

A racing game where you win by crushing your opponents. Cool!

ON: PS2, XBOX, PC
PUB: EMPIRE
OUT: AUTUMN

FREEDOM FORCE VS 3RD REICH

Fast-paced tactical role-player set in a distinct comic book universe

ON: PC
PUB: IRRATIONAL GAMES
OUT: TBC

GRADIUS V

Flash graphics and big guns, but it's still an old skool shooter

ON: PS2
PUB: KONAMI
OUT: WINTER

GUILTY GEAR ISUKA

Chaotic 2D beat 'em up with four-player simultaneous fighting!

ON: PS2
PUB: SAMMY
OUT: END 2004

HELLFORCES

Lucifer fancies a visit to Earth and you've got to stop him in this FPS

ON: PC
PUB: BUKA
OUT: SPRING 2005

JAK 3

New powers and vehicles feature in this story-driven platformer

ON: PS2
PUB: SONY
OUT: END 2004

ARMORED CORE NEXUS

Popular US mech-mauler that doesn't really offer anything new

ON: PS2
PUB: FROM SOFTWARE
OUT: AUTUMN

AXIS & ALLIES

Clever RTS epic featuring real-life battle scenarios like Omaha beach

ON: PC
PUB: ATARI
OUT: AUTUMN

BACKYARD WRESTLING 2

More ultra-violence from these pain-loving amateur grapplers

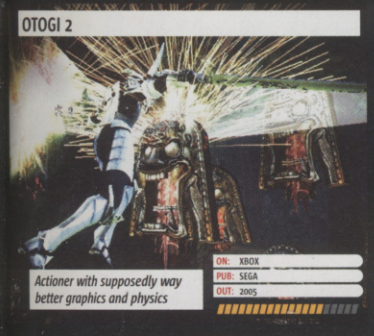
ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: EIDOS
OUT: AUTUMN

BATEN KAITOS

Card-based fantasy role-player that's heavy on strategy

ON: GAMECUBE
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: TBC

OTOGI 2



Actioner with supposedly way better graphics and physics

ON: XBOX
PUB: SEGA
OUT: 2005

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Squad-based WWII shooter that boasts revolutionary enemy AI

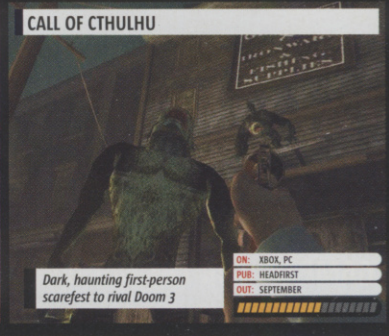
ON: PS2, XBOX, PC
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: END 2004

BUJINGAI: THE FORSAKEN CITY

Over-the-top arcade adventure, heavy on magic and mauling

ON: PS2
PUB: BAM!
OUT: SUMMER

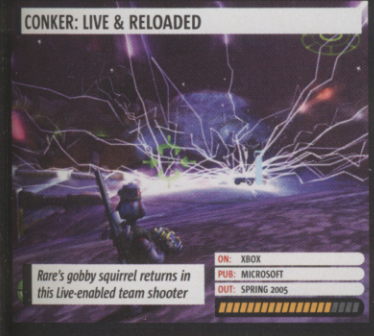
CALL OF CTHULHU



Dark, haunting first-person scarefest to rival Doom 3

ON: XBOX, PC
PUB: HEADFIRST
OUT: SEPTEMBER

CONKER: LIVE & RELOADED



Rare's gobby squirrel returns in this Live-enabled team shooter

ON: XBOX
PUB: MICROSOFT
OUT: SPRING 2005

CRASH 'N' BURN

Build your dream custom car, then smash it to bits. Fun? You bet!

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: EIDOS
OUT: AUTUMN

CRASH TWINSANITY

Team up with arch enemy Neo Cortex to save Crash's island home

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: AUTUMN

CRIMSON TEARS

Cel-shaded scrapper that mixes fighting and role-playing

ON: PS2
PUB: CAPCOM
OUT: WINTER

DUNGEON SIEGE II

Hot new heroic powers make this action-laden sequel one to watch

ON: PC
PUB: MICROSOFT
OUT: END 2004

ENTHUSIA PRO RACING

High speed racer with cars from over 40 real-life manufacturers

ON: PS2
PUB: KONAMI
OUT: 2005

EVERQUEST 2

160 creature types, 16 races, 24 classes. This is hardcore RPGing

ON: PC
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: AUTUMN

EVIL GENIUS

Management sim where you get to cause havoc. Sounds like a laugh!

ON: PC
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: TBC

GEIST

You're a supernatural power that haunts humans in this dark FPS

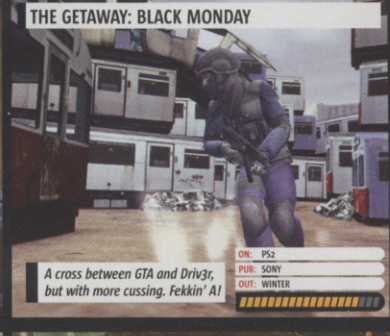
ON: GAMECUBE
PUB: NINTENDO
OUT: WINTER

GET ON DA MIC

Singstar with a hip-hop flava. Should be called Rapstar, really

ON: PS2
PUB: EIDOS
OUT: AUTUMN

THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY



A cross between GTA and Driv3r, but with more cussing. Fekkin' A!

ON: PS2
PUB: SONY
OUT: WINTER

GOD OF WAR

Single-player hyper-violent fighter based on Greek mythology

ON: PS2
PUB: SONY
OUT: 2005

KAMEO

Shaping-shifting adventure packed with puzzles and fighting

ON: XBOX
PUB: MICROSOFT
OUT: JANUARY 2005

LEISURE SUIT LARRY: MAGNA CUM LAUDE

Imagine American Pie: The Game, but without the real-life ladies

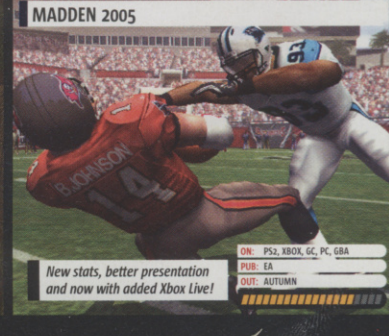
ON: PS2, XBOX, PC
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: WINTER

A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Hotter than Potter, and based on the Lemony Snicket books

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC, GBA
PUB: ACTIVISION
OUT: WINTER

MADDEN 2005

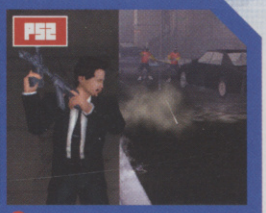


New stats, better presentation and now with added Xbox Live!

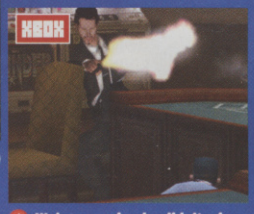
ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC, GBA
PUB: EA
OUT: AUTUMN

Another hostage who's gone rather weak at the knees

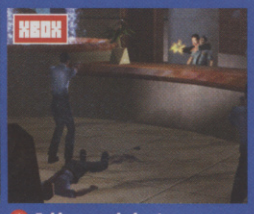
An energetic gunfight with a couple of gangsters



Stay smart – a pair of automatic weapons helps too



We're guessing he didn't win on the blackjack tables



Taking people hostage can help you get out of tricky spots

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: ACCLAIM OUT: AUTUMN

100 BULLETS

GAME ON FOR THE HARD-BOILED COMIC SERIES

It's already won awards from the comic industry, now 100 Bullets is gunning for new fans – you.

Part hard-boiled crime story, part paranoid espionage thriller, Agent Graves is a mysterious figure who offers his 'clients' a unique opportunity. He provides the proof, the gun and the immunity to exact revenge on a person who's done them wrong.

With an original story and script from the series' creator Brian Azzarello, and art direction by his partner in crime Eduardo Risso, 100 Bullets could be the most authentic spin-off from comic to game ever.

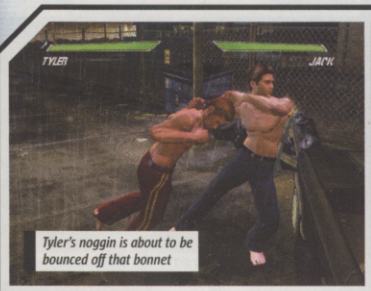
The gameplay promises to be a mix of gunplay and high drama with two playable characters, Cole Burns and Snow Falls (the latter a new character to the 100 Bullets universe). Conspiracy and revenge hits consoles later this year.

The sprawling locations are perfect for shootouts

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The action looks quite formulaic, but with a script and art direction from the co-creators of the comic book, 100 Bullets could be one of the best plot-driven games ever. Top marks to Acclaim for keeping the creators on board – their involvement makes 100 Bullets one well worth keeping a very close eye on.

EXCITE METER



Tyler's noggin is about to be bounced off that bonnet

When a bone gets broken you get a cool X-Ray to see what damage has been done

That's not a bad case of acne, that's one bruised and very bloodied face

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: VIVENDI OUT: AUTUMN

FIGHT CLUB

DO NOT TALK ABOUT FIGHT CLUB... OH, WHAT THE HELL!

One of the greatest movies of the last decade is hitting PlayStation 2 and Xbox this year in a brutal, no-holds-barred beat 'em up.

Fight Club promises to be one of the most realistic brawlers on the block with broken bones, bloodstained clothes and real-time facial deformation. Or in plain English, it's a beat 'em up where the fights don't stop until someone is an inch from death.

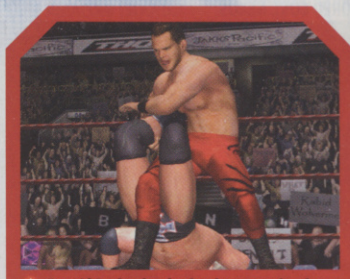
Players can choose from ten movie characters and three different fighting styles, and can create their own character and play through a variety of game types including a Story mode. Here, if you take too much of a beating, you'll have to check yourself into a hospital before you're ready for another bout.

Besides the pummelling and bone-breaking, nearly everything else on view is destructible, including windows, cars, walls, doors and dumpsters. The beating begins this winter.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When we first heard that Vivendi had secured the rights to one of our favourite movies we almost burst out laughing. And, after playing Fight Club, we're still not convinced that such a smart, brutal film translates that well into a beat 'em up. But at least it's gritty, has some neat ideas and is attempting to do something different.

EXCITE METER


Day Of Reckoning is shaping up to be the best GameCube wrestler so far

WWE DAY OF RECKONING

LOOKS LIKE THQ'S BOUGHT A TOMBOLA

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC PUB: THQ OUT: 2004/05

Despite only having one WWE title on show at E3, it didn't stop the THQ guys from announcing the forthcoming grapplers for the PlayStation 2 and Xbox. Good job they did too, because the new titles for both might otherwise cause a bit of confusion for fans of the series.

Playable on the show floor was WWE Day Of Reckoning, the forthcoming GameCube wrestler. With the GameCube WWE titles previously going by the WrestleMania brand, this is now free to move to the Xbox. This means that the forthcoming Xbox game will go by the name WWE: WrestleMania 21. It's set for release next year.

The knock-on effect of these shifting titles is that the Raw name is now free. This paves the way for the new PlayStation 2 game to be entitled WWE SmackDown! Vs. Raw. See what they did there?

The Bra and Panties match will be in the new SmackDown! but it's also a big part of Day Of Reckoning

WrestleMania 21 has a new developer, Studio Gigante, and we're promised new features and improved graphics

Despite the name changes, it's good to see that the WWE games are in safe hands and will bring an intense fix of action to consoles

Buckle up. Danger wants a driver.

XBOX LIVE

RALLISPORT 2 CHALLENGE

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/rallisport2

Microsoft game studios

DICE

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^ It's developed by a group of 28 guys who worked on the Medal Of Honor games, then left to start their own company

Erm, try ducking? Bombers will pound your positions as you struggle to assault the enemy

CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR

ANSWER THE CALL ON CONSOLE

DUE TO WATCH

FORMAT: PS2, XB, GC PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION OUT: 29 OCTOBER

There's a real feeling of being part of something bigger than just you. Look at all your mates!

You probably played Call Of Duty on PC – we rated it 90% last year. Now a console version of the cracking FPS, subtitled Finest Hour, is on the smoke-filled horizon. It's a whole new game with new characters and environments. To blow up, obviously.

PC Call Of Duty emphasised squad conflict on a staggering scale, while still concentrating on providing an exciting single-player experience. From our first look at Finest Hour we can confirm the same will be true of the console version.

You'll be able to take command of vehicles like this big bugger-off tank

You don't play a single character but rather hop around the Allied fronts. You'll kick the crap out of Nazis as Afro-American members of the 761st Black Panther tank division, a female Russian sniper and a good old English commando, among others.

But the varied viewpoints all witness the same thing: the harrowing horrors of war. Imagine the opening scene of console Medal Of Honor, multiply it by ten then chuck a grenade at it. You'll be shellshocked by every moment of gameplay as comrades fall, bullets fizz past your noggin, and explosions ring in your lugs.

The level we saw was set on the miserable Russian Eastern Front. We started in a scabby row boat and had to advance from the blood-red river up a crossfire-streaked urban killzone. Which was probably rubbish if you actually had to do it in real life, but feels awesome in a game. Look out for our preview in the next couple of months.

CALL OF DUTY: UNITED OFFENSIVE

There's an update for PC owners too, so they don't have to feel left out. United Offensive is an expansion pack that promises tons more bullets, blood and Nazi-battering.

Expect more than ten new maps, new weapons, new multiplayer character classes and improved effects like realistic weather and explosions. We're promised that you'll get to play with more vehicles, including a spanking big bomber besieged by Luftwaffe planes that you have to fight off with fixed guns.

^ United Offensive's set pieces really plunge you into the brutal and cruel intensity of war

"BULLETS FIZZ PAST YOUR NOGGIN AND EXPLOSIONS RING IN YOUR LUGS"

Expect loads of accurate WWII weaponry to inflict some Nazi (har-har!) wounds to your enemies

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Cheers, grandad. Cheers for risking your life for our country so that we can play games like Finest Hour. The sensation of mortal danger and the cacophony of war is captured better here than on any other console FPS we've seen, and as long as some framerate issues and the jerky controls are ironed out Finest Hour will rock.

EXCITE METER

KINGDOM HEARTS 2

DON'T DISS SQUARE'S DISNEY GAME

ON: PS2 PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX OUT: SPRING 2005

Set a year after the first game, Kingdom Hearts 2 sees Sora, Donald and Goofy still on their quest to find their mates. It looks like The Heartless are back, though, so we're expecting more Final Fantasy-style RPG-ing.

So why do we care about a Disney game? Because FF's holy trinity of designers – Tetsuya Nomura, Yuichi Kanemori and Kazushige Nojima – are behind it all. This is a good thing.

New Disney characters confirmed are Hercules, Aladdin, Peter Pan, Belle and the Beast

EXCITE METER

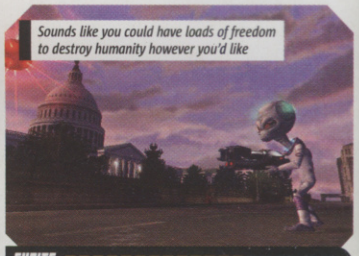
DESTROY ALL HUMANS!

ALIENS ARE MARTIAN AGAINST US!

ON: PS2, XB PUBLISHER: THQ OUT: SPRING 2005

This is cool. You get to play an elite alien warrior from the Furon race (we hope they're from Uranus, har har) called Cryptosprodium -137, and you're part of a force invading Earth.

You can use your superior alien weaponry to blast humans to bits, or exercise your brain by reading minds or levitating your foes. Cooler still, you'll be able to fly about in your UFO or nick cars. Destroy All Humans! should be loads of fun – or at least better than Atari's Destroy All Monsters.



Sounds like you could have loads of freedom to destroy humanity however you'd like

EXCITE METER

BOKTAI 2: SOLAR BOY DJANGO

MORE CRAZILY NAMED FUN IN THE SUN

ON: GBA PUBLISHER: KONAMI OUT: EARLY 2005

Boktai? It's great, even if you need to get up off your arse every five minutes and get out into the sunlight. Bit drastic, but still fantastic.

We've rated it 85% in this very issue. The sequel, however, is promising much more use of the sun sensor in new and funky ways to even further immerse you in the gameworld.

The Japanese name for Boktai 2 translates as 'Your Sun', so hopefully harnessing the fully awesome power of the ball of flame will let you kick vampire butt even more inventively.

Proof that getting sunburn is good for you, or at least for your GBA

EXCITE METER

Buckle up. Danger just jumped in.

"RalliSport Challenge 2 is bigger and better than any other rally game"
9/10 XBM

Take racing to the extreme as you spin out, fishtail, hydroplane, and skid your way through every environment you've always wanted to drive in. Choose from 91 tracks and over 40 powerful vehicles, including every famous rally car since 1979. Race in 5 different rally sports, like the Crossover Duel and Ice Racing. Take on the best in XSN Sports leagues and tournaments via Xbox Live. And anyone else who tries to steal your track space.

RalliSport 2 Challenge

it's good to play together

xbox.com/rallisport2

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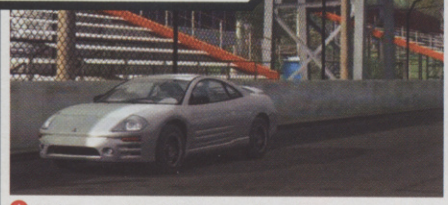


No images yet, but it's been confirmed that car damage is included – expect scratched paint and crumpled metal

All the tracks are perfect recreations of real-world circuits, and they look mint

FORZA MOTORSPORT

FEEL THE FORZA WITH MICROSOFT'S GT KILLER

ON: XBOX, PC, GC PUB: VIVENDI OUT: JUNE 2005

How do you build a racer with enough power to leave Gran Turismo choking on its exhaust fumes? Start with a bare chassis, tweak and tune every component, fit a fat-arse bodykit, paint the whole thing metallic red and stick some go-faster decals on it.

That's what Microsoft has done with Forza Motorsport. Car customisation is all over racing games like cheap alloys on Vauxhall Novas, but Forza is taking it to the next level. You can fiddle with EVERY LAST nut and bolt on over 200 cars from 60 manufacturers, including the licences Gran Turismo has never managed to snaffle: Ferrari and Porsche.

You can trick out street racers like Skylines in full-on Fast And The Furious style, tune executive wagons like Beamers into racing beasts, or slap your team colours onto monstrous Porsche supercars. You can even train AI-controlled 'Drivatars' to compete for your team.

These cool ideas are backed up with some superb driving fun. The experience is closer to GT than Gotham, with accurate performance physics ensuring a satisfying ride. It looks awesome too, nipping along at an ultra-smooth 60fps with some delicious visual effects.

Chuck in eight-player Xbox Live support and the green light's showing for Forza to snatch the chequered flag from GT. Excited? We've blown our engine!

Forza's having a crack at the street customisation market, too – watch your back NFS2, Juiced and MC3

You can fully customise your racer's appearance with decals, colour schemes and sponsors

Forza is going to be Xbox's Gran Turismo, but can it beat Sony's racer at its own game?

"INCLUDES THE LICENCES GT HAS NEVER MANAGED TO SNAFFLE: FERRARI AND PORSCHE"

Everything zips along with a silky 60fps smoothness not yet seen in an Xbox racer. Look how pretty...

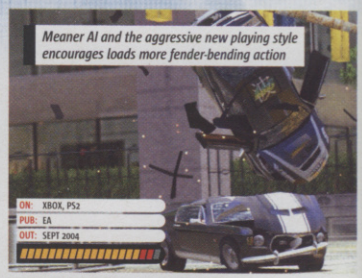
HANDS-ON PLAY

HOT SHOT

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

You'll be astonished when you see this up close – the cars are so detailed it's ridiculous. You can see shadows passing over the car AND inside the car, the tiniest of reflections on headlamps, and off the hubs. It's insane. The modding aspect looks set to be the best in any racer – there won't be the same two cars online, which is great too. Blinding!

EXCITE METER



Meaner AI and the aggressive new playing style encourages loads more fender-bending action

ON: XBOX, PS2
PUB: EA
OUT: SEPT 2004

BURNOUT 3

CRASH RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME

Mike went hands-on with Burnout 3 at E3 and came back a weak-kneed, gibbering speed freak.

The visuals have been tarted up to a ridiculous degree, the crashes are more violent and cinematic, the online multiplayer modes kick ass, and the sensation of speed is like nothing we've seen. Mark our words: Burnout 3 WILL RULE.

WRC 4

SONY KICKS UP MORE DIRT

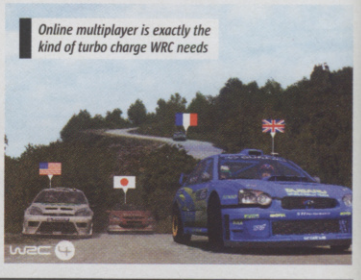
Online play seems to have revitalised the rally genre, and now Sony's long-running series is about to go multiplayer.

You'll be able to post your smokin' time trial digits online or take on opponents wheel-to-wheel. It's not confirmed, but we expect four players max.

The game is fully licensed by the WRC so expect every last car, stage and blade of grass to be accurately modelled. WRC 3 looked ace: WRC 4 leaves skiddies all over it.

ON: PS2
PUB: SONY
OUT: AUTUMN 2004

Spinning out on a mountain bend never looked as good as this before



Online multiplayer is exactly the kind of turbo charge WRC needs

ONE TO WATCH

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC, GBA
PUB: EA
OUT: CHRISTMAS 2004

NFS UNDERGROUND 2

STREET RACER BACK INTO POLE POSITION

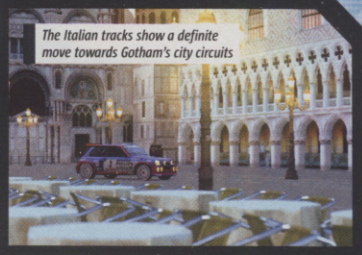
One of the biggest disappointments of E3 was not getting a look at Underground 2, but some new details and a single screen leaked out anyway.

The city in the NFS sequel will be free-roaming, GTA-style, and you'll drive around five 'hoods meeting champs and beating chumps. Over 30 licensed motors will again be customisable, with twice as many options – EA is saying there are 70 billion possible combos!

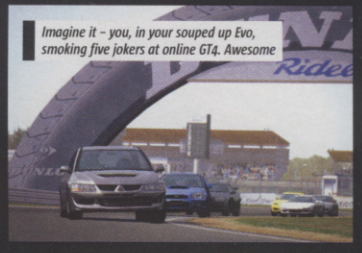
COMPACT MODEL

Like a souped-up hatchback model of the PS2 game, GT4: Mobile on PSP blew us away with its ultra-smooth visuals. Check out our PSP Versus DS feature on page 16 for the lowdown on this pocket rocket.

We're not even sure what to say about this: it looks absolutely PHENOMENAL



The Italian tracks show a definite move towards Gotham's city circuits



Imagine it – you, in your souped up Evo, smoking five jokers at online GT4. Awesome

GRAN TURISMO 4

SONY POPS THE HOOD TO SHOW OFF MORE NEW INFO

ON: XBOX, PC, GC PUB: VIVENDI OUT: JUNE 2005

With GT4: Prologue finally getting a UK release (see our review on page 87) it felt like we knew everything there was to know about Sony's long-awaited racer. We didn't.

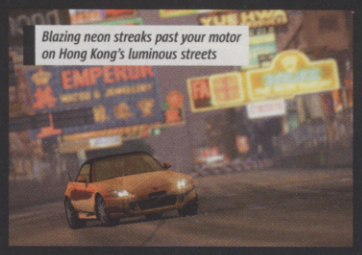
GT creator and all-round driving game god Kazunori Yamauchi was at E3 to floor the GT4 info accelerator.

Prologue isn't a finished vision of the full game – everything, including car physics and visuals (especially those weird-looking spectators) will be getting a good rub-down with a soft chamois leather.

Three new tracks were playable at the show: a Hong Kong street track that dazzled with its lanterns and signs strung across the road, a track around Italy's beautifully rugged Costa di Amalfi, and the huge Nurburgring Nordschleife that reared its twisty 13-mile head in Gotham 2. We hoped to see more but Kazunori at least confirmed that tracks in Brooklyn, San Marco, Shibuya, Sagano and Nagano would appear in the final 50.

As for motors, 100 were on show from the confirmed roster of over 500. The earliest car dates from 1886 so GT4 will be a true car fanatic's dream playground. Online features were reconfirmed, too: six players, full voice chat, and supported community options like message boards and FAQs.

GT4's release date has been set for November. With Forza Motorsport looming in the rear view mirror we can't wait to see if Sony beats this deadline.

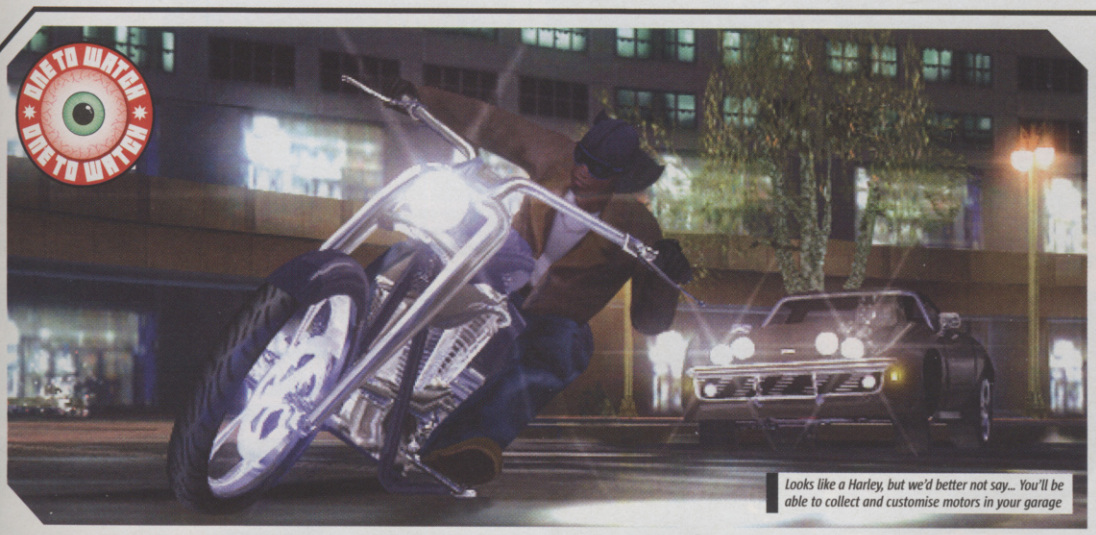


Blazing neon streaks past your motor on Hong Kong's luminous streets

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

We've been bitching about having to wait and wait for GT4 because it keeps slipping, but playing this opened-up version reaffirms that this is definitely gonna be worth it. All the new areas, especially the Costa di Amalfi, beat the crap out of the other tracks we saw in all the other racing games on show at E3 – including Forza Motorsport.

ENDITE METER



Looks like a Harley, but we'd better not say... You'll be able to collect and customise motors in your garage

The car selection's looking really US-centric right now. Good news if ya like ya muscle cars

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Rollin' on DUBs... The Midnight Club series has suddenly upped the attitude and gone all out to be the most gang-busters racer out there. You can really pimp your ride now, personalising every officially licensed motor to your unique style, slamming it out on the online scene. Plus it's even faster this time – so fast it's almost supersonic!

ENDITE METER

MIDNIGHT CLUB 3: DUB EDITION

STREET RACER PIMPS OUT IN US CAR MAG HOOK-UP

ON: PS2, XB PUB: ROCKSTAR OUT: CHRISTMAS 2004

Everyone's going mental about DUBs. That's what the Yanks call huge alloy wheels, and DUB Magazine is America's coolest car mag.

A natural choice, then, to hook up with Rockstar for Midnight Club 3. Rockstar is thrashing the bling-bling, pimped-out US automobile angle, and we love it. Licensed cars are a shoe-in, and so far we've seen classic Corvettes and every basketball star's favourite, the monstrous Cadillac Escalade SUV.

Customisation will be much more in-depth and intense, with the emphasis on phattening up your motor with huge alloys and gleaming paint jobs. Should make a change from NFS Underground and Juiced's Japanese rice rockets.

Rockstar San Diego definitely has the skills to pull off a street racing drive-by on the competition.

We want to fit Spinners – it looks like you're still moving when you've stopped!

SHOW SHOCKER

TEKKEN 5

CAN NAMCO RECAPTURE THE MAGIC OF THE IRON FIST?

ON: ARCADE, PS2 PUB: NAMCO OUT: WINTER

Namco unveiled the next instalment in the King of the Iron Fist tournament at E3, with the debut of Tekken 5 running on arcade hardware.

Following the events of Tekken 4, Kazuya and Heihachi Mishima are faced with an army of Proto Jack robots under the control of new villain Raven, who bears an uncanny resemblance to Wesley Snipes in the Blade movies.

Graphically the sequel looks very similar to Tekken 4, so a PS2 version down the line is inevitable. Two other new characters are Asuka Kazama (we assume she's related to Jin's mother Jun), and Feng Wei who specialises in kung fu. Along with the new characters it looks like everyone from Tekken 4 will appear in the sequel.

The biggest innovation for Tekken 5 is a return to level-ground arenas, ditching the raised terrain of the last game. Namco has stated that it would like the title to resemble Virtua Fighter a bit more. One indication of this is the addition of move buffering. This allows you to input a move while already performing one – a first for the Tekken series.

It also appears that the active elements of each stage will be increased. Throwing a character into a wall now produces a shower of debris and the levels look far more dynamic – one stand-out so far being Heihachi's burning mansion.

Nina may have a project on the side, but must still hold her own in T5

The raised terrain of Tekken 4 is gone – now the emphasis is on fighting

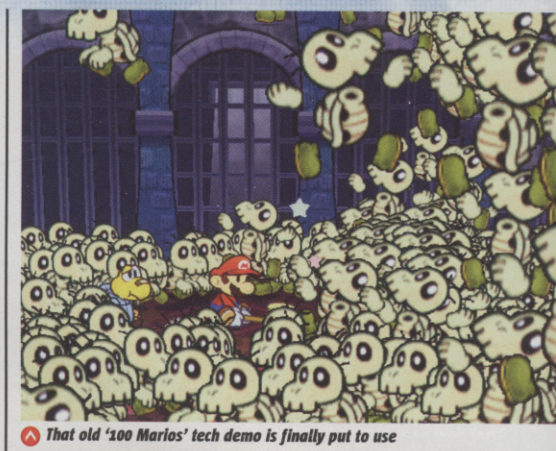
Jack is back in familiar robo-guise – looks like Bryan is on the receiving end here. Ouch!

The arenas promise to be more interactive. Check out Hiehachi's burning mansion!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

After the faltering steps made by Tekken 4, it appears that Namco is getting its house in order. Graphically this doesn't try to surpass the previous game – all the improvements appear to be gameplay refinements, lifted from the competition. But when your competition is as stunning as Virtua Fighter, cribbing is no bad thing.

EXCITE METER


That old '100 Marios' tech demo is finally put to use

PAPER MARIO 2

IT'S-A ME, I'M A PIECE OF A4

ON: GAMECUBE PUB: NINTENDO OUT: WINTER

Mario's forthcoming RPG adventure Paper Mario 2 continues to impress us with its colourful, distinctive visuals.

Even more dazzling at E3 was the wealth of ideas the game boasts. Mario must make full use of his paper qualities to survive. He can fold into a paper airplane and take to the air, turn sideways to slip through the narrowest of passages and roll into a tube to bounce to safety.

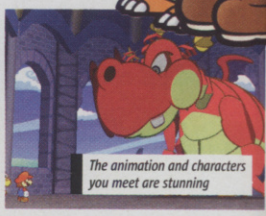
There's also an audience participation feature for battles. Good timing when dodging or launching attacks will impress a virtual audience – their cheers and adulation build the power for super-attacks. Fail to impress them though, and you'll be pelted with rubbish.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

With the proliferation of 3D gaming, it's great to see a 2D game having fun with its inherent flatness. The gameplay of Paper Mario shines with a wealth of innovative ideas and visually, two dimensions don't stop the title from being a looker. He may be thin but this game is full of quality.

EXCITE METER

You can expect plenty of side-quests and mini-games


The animation and characters you meet are stunning

PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

YOU AND HUGH'S ARMY...?

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: UBISOFT OUT: WINTER

It may only be virtual, but the prospect of stepping into Hugh Hefner's smoking jacket is one of the more intriguing highlights on the release schedules.

Playboy: The Mansion is an empire building game like no other. One part The Sims, two parts Leisure Suit Larry, and mixed with a healthy brace of bunnies.

Enjoy Playboy owner Hugh Hefner's lifestyle, overseeing production of the monthly magazine, hosting parties at the mansion, mixing with celebrities and making new girlfriends.

Keeping on top, so to speak, of each of these elements will see you expand the Playboy empire, allowing you to expand the mansion and meet more women!

One of the biggest parts of the game is choosing the ladies to photograph – oh yes!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

There wasn't a lot of Playboy: The Mansion on show at E3, but that doesn't stop us being extremely intrigued by it. Currently it looks very similar to The Sims, with characters given a cartoon-ish look and The Hef looking very much like Bruce Wayne. It's a great concept. Let's hope the finished article lives up to the dream.

EXCITE METER

VIRTUA QUEST

A YOUNG BOY LEARNS FROM THE FIGHTING MASTERS

ON: PS2, GAMECUBE PUB: SEGA OUT: AUTUMN

Sega finally unveiled the long-announced Virtua Quest at E3. Mixing elements of role-playing games with a strong level of action, you play through the game as a young boy named Sei, searching for data clusters that contain Virtua Souls.

Virtua Souls are time capsules that contain information about the martial arts abilities of the legendary Virtua Fighter characters. They enable Sei to learn complex fighting moves and battle an evil syndicate known as Judgment 6, who want to learn the secrets for themselves.

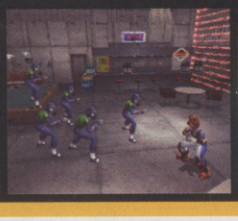
Sei soon discovers that only he has the power to learn from the Virtua masters, and must use this gift to stop Judgment 6 from bringing down the infrastructure of a vast virtual world.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When we first learned that AM2 was working on an RPG using the Virtua Fighter characters, we had high hopes of an epic quest and a worthy addition to the Virtua heritage. It's sad to report that Virtua Quest has left us extremely disappointed. We can only hope that AM2 is hard at work on Shenmue III and not putting its full efforts into this.

EXCITE METER

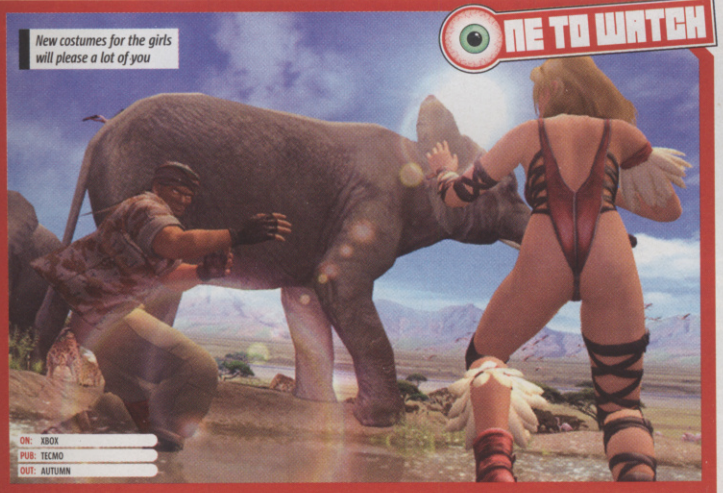
Sei's distinctive look is reminiscent of the original Virtua Fighter



You'll have plenty of opportunity to put your Virtua skills to the test

Sei learns new moves the hard way and must defeat Akira to prove his worth

ONE TO WATCH



New costumes for the girls will please a lot of you

ON: XBOX
PUB: TECMO
OUT: AUTUMN

DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE

REMIXED WITH A NEW ENGINE AND ONLINE PLAY

Dead Or Alive Ultimate is a two-disc collectors' edition containing the original 1997 Dead Or Alive alongside a beefed-up and expanded new version of Dead Or Alive 2.

The first game is essentially a straight port of the original arcade game – it's the update of Dead Or Alive 2 that has all the new features. Redesigned on a brand new engine, it boasts new interactive environments, fighting moves and costumes. Both games will be Xbox Live-compatible.

DOA 2 Ultimate boasts the highest number of stages in the series so far, including some brand new ones. A new opening movie and cut-scenes will also reveal new details about your favourite fighters, including why Ayame was born and what the flower's significance was in Kasumi's ending.

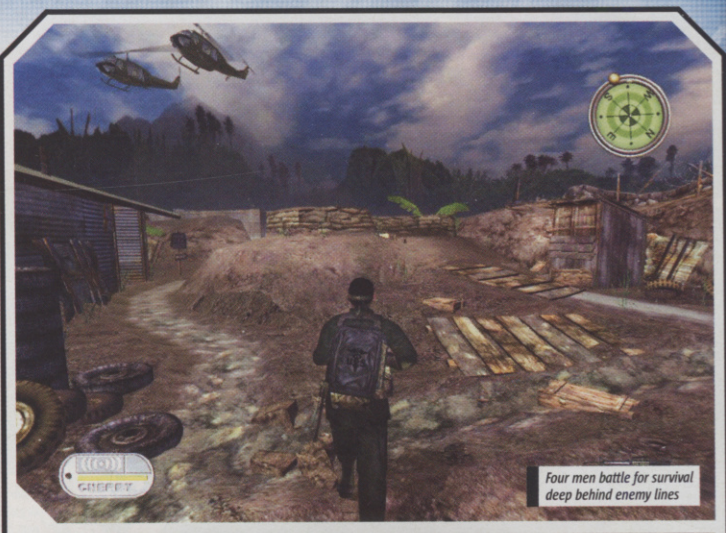
DOA Ultimate promises new locations alongside online play

That's certainly a unique way to attempt snowboarding

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

A nice package from Tecmo – what you're getting is basically DOA 2.5, running on a stunning new engine and boasting Live support. There's also a wardrobe full of new costumes that'll please the pervier amongst you. The other new features and the addition of the original DOA make this more than a simple stop-gap before DOA 4.

EXCITE METER



Four men battle for survival deep behind enemy lines

Good job someone built a road through the jungle

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Conflict: Vietnam strays away from the gung-ho approach of most shooters in favour of a nervy battle for survival – the jungle can be far more deadly than any enemy troops. You must also keep an eye open for booby traps and abandoned equipment, or any transportation you can utilise. One thing's for sure, this is a series heading in the right direction.

EXCITE METER

CONFLICT: VIETNAM

I'M A MARINE, GET ME OUT OF HERE!

ON: XBOX, PC, PS2 PUB: SCI OUT: AUTUMN

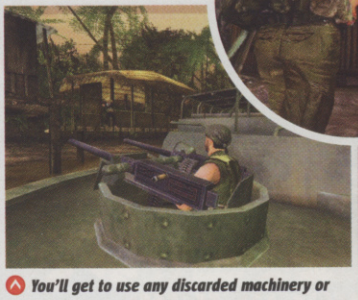
The next instalment in the series takes the action from the desert to the jungle for Conflict: Vietnam.

Set during the 1968 Tet Offensive, you take control of four US soldiers cut off from their unit and tasked with fighting their way through hostile territory back to friendly lines.

The game doesn't depict the course of the war, focusing instead on the four men struggling for survival in the hostile jungle against a ruthless terrain and a seemingly ever-present invisible enemy.

Fourteen missions span a variety of environments. Lead your squad down Vietnamese rivers, into local villages with friendly and non-friendly fire and through exotic temples.

The river is quicker than the jungle, but just as deadly. And not just from the crocodiles



You'll get to use any discarded machinery or equipment you find, so keep an eye out

Ragman engages in a spot of hunting. That tank will look good next to the moose's head

NEWS SPECIAL

Okay hands up, it was playable but despite my pathetic pleas I had to watch a Ubisoft henchman actually put the Prince through his paces. Still, POP 2 looks like it's going to play phenomenally. All the new sick moves will make the game appeal to a much broader audience of platform action freaks. Hazaar!

ONE TO WATCH

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

A ROYAL RETURN FROM THE KING OF THE ACTION SCENE

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC PUB: UBISOFT OUT: AUTUMN 2004

When Ubisoft's prancing Prince appeared in Sands Of Time at last year's E3 he totally stole the show.

It was a tough act to follow, but the sequel already looks likely to live up to all expectations, delivering a darker, sharper and more in-depth epic quest. The Prince has kicked his squeaky-clean image into the desert dust. Six years have passed since events in the last game and he's transformed into a merciless royal rogue.

Our hero's new aggro attitude is obvious even from the way he dresses – he's got the whole strappy black leather thing going on. But by far the biggest change is his fighting style. The Prince is miles meaner – he's got a newfound sadistic streak!

THE MENTAL MONARCH

Instead of just leaping over enemies and slicing them with a sword, you can now grab enemies in a neck-lock from behind. Once in this position you can use your hostages as shields, steal their weapons, or kill them in a variety of gruesome ways, like slowly slicing their throat with a blade!

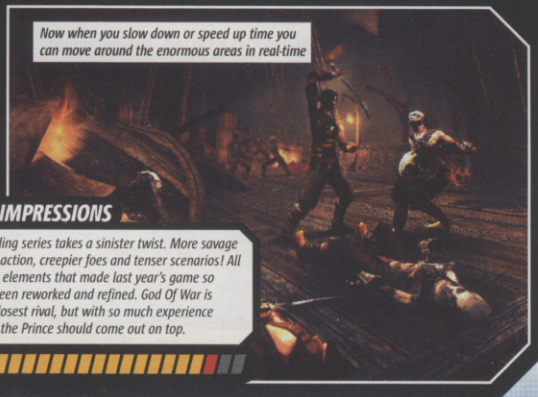
The Prince has also learnt a host of slick new stunts. Peg it along a wall and when you reach a long flowing curtain you can stick your blade in it and tear down it, just like they do in the movies. Plus, you're now able to draw your weapon and fight while sprinting along walls. Dead handy because some of the new monsters do the same, erupting into some bloody corridor jousting-style encounters.

Sands Of Time was far too short. Ubisoft has promised that this adventure is many hours longer

Everything about POP2 is moody. The environments are sinister enough for a Silent Hill game

A fave for reigning supreme in the adventure kingdom then, when it's released this Autumn.

Other new techniques include blood-spurting beheadings and the ability to cut enemies in half at the waist. Mmm-hmm!



Now when you slow down or speed up time you can move around the enormous areas in real-time

You have to scramble up this big lug's back, straddle his shoulders and sink your steel into his skull!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The time-bending series takes a sinister twist. More savage hand-to-hand action, creepier foes and tenser scenarios! All the gameplay elements that made last year's game so classic have been reworked and refined. God Of War is probably its closest rival, but with so much experience under its belt the Prince should come out on top.

EXCITE METER

FARCRY INSTINCTS

EXPERIENCE A SLICE OF FIRST-PERSON PARADISE ON XBOX

EXCITE METER

ON: XBOX
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: AUTUMN 2004

■ Far Cry's sandpaper-chinned hero Jack Carver is back on shooting duty, but he's developed new inhuman abilities for

SUPERHUMAN-STYLE

this console version. You gain new skills as you progress – huge jumps, better vision, and much more.

■ Although the paradise setting is strikingly samiliar to landscapes that feature in the PC version, Instincts is an

LANDSCAPE GARDENING

entirely new game. All of the environments have been remodelled and rebuilt to create a unique playing field.

■ One of the coolest additions to the Xbox version is traps! You can gather objects from around the islands and use them

YOU AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE!

to incapacitate your enemies. There are four different types, including leg snares and death pits.

■ As well as all the vehicles that were available in the PC game, you'll get to steer many others into combat, including jet

TIME FOR WATERSPORTS

skis. Plus there'll be loads of jumps and stunts opportunities. Think Wave Race with machine-guns!

■ Ubisoft has confirmed Instincts will ship with Live-enabled multiplayer, which will feature vehicles and traps

MULTIPLAYER NIRVANA

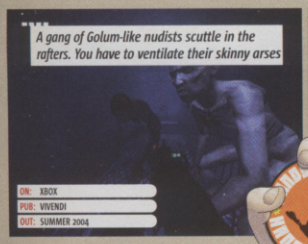
from the single-player campaign. One of the developers told us that we could expect 1-16 player matches.

■ A new roll move has been included. Now you can lie in the prone position and flip over onto your back. Sounds a bit dumb but

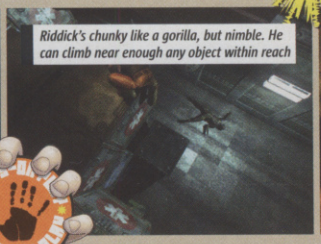
YOU GOTTA ROLL WITH IT

it's awesome, because you can crawl under huts and surprise enemies by shooting them from below!

SHOW SHOCKER



A gang of Golum-like nudists scuttle in the rafters. You have to ventilate their skinny arses


Riddick's chunky like a gorilla, but nimble. He can climb near enough any object within reach

Riddick sneaks up on an unsuspecting guard – his burly forearm's gonna crack some windpipe

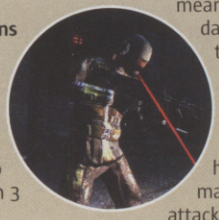
There's no point trying to fight robots hand-to-hand. You need to rely on your trusty assault rifle to short-circuit them

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK

VIN DIESEL HITS XBOX WITH IMPRESSIVE FORCE

It's the prequel to Pitch Black and bursts onto the big screen and Xbox this Summer. Planet CVG brought you the first screens months ago, but at E3 we got up close and nasty with Riddick. Talk about a dark horse. No-one expected anything special from this movie spin-off, but it's staggering!

Looks-wise it's up there with the Halo 2, and it plays like a cross between Doom 3 and Splinter Cell – hardcore gun 'n' run encounters mixed with shadow-sneaking stealth.



It's all about escape and survival. You've got to bust out of a maximum security prison by any means necessary. You can crawl up into the darkness, shimmy along ledges and poles to avoid guards and prison gangs below.

Or use chilling first-person close combat moves like vicious neck snaps to cripple enemies. Alternatively club the crap out of them face-to-face with heavy punches, sharp elbows, grapple manoeuvres, combos, and clever counter-attacks. Plus there are stacks of guns and makeshift weapons to go wild with. Swee-eet!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Riddick is a pedigree hybrid, borrowing the best elements from the finest shooters and sneakers. We're dead pleased – if a tad surprised – to report from what we've seen it's a sleeping giant set to unleash super heavyweight thrills on Xbox in the very near future. It's so refreshing to see a movie spin-off look so phenomenal and feel this fresh.

EXCITE METER

As you pepper a prison guard with bullets their body convulses and limbs snap realistically with every shot

BLOOD WILL TELL

AMPUTEE WARRIOR IS 'ARMLESS ENOUGH

Right, this is a weird one! Blood Will Tell is no ordinary samurai game, and nor is the hero Hyakkimaru.

His artificial arms come off to reveal razor-sharp swords poking from his stumps (like those freaks in The Suffering). His legs also pop off to reveal missile launchers that fire rockets out of his kneecaps! To reload he packs ammo up his butt – okay, we made bit up but it wouldn't be that weird considering...

The story mode can be enjoyed co-op and plays like Onimusha crossed with Devil May Cry. Stylish slash-happy action and enormo boss clashes.

Hyakkimaru tries his luck on the wheel of misfortune

He had all his limbs removed as a baby and replaced with deadly weapons!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Sega's bizarre Manga-adapted adventure mixes classic hack 'n' slash mayhem with insane touches. However, although the characters are undoubtedly completely off-the-wall the action doesn't at this stage seem that original. We suspect it'll be unlikely to come out unscathed when it goes up against mighty gaming warriors like Onimusha 3.

EXCITE METER

OUT RUN 2

SEGA'S FERRARI FEST RIPS UP THE OPEN ROAD ON XBOX LIVE

The legendary arcade version of Outrun is over seventeen years old! However, Outrun 2 isn't just a buffed up remake of the original. It's moved with the times and is looking to take on big-leaguers like Burnout 3.

Handling feels awesome and edgy. You're always pushing max speeds and living in fear of spectacular spinouts. But the biggest thrill is the confirmation of Live-enabled multiplayer races. Sega has not yet stated the final number of players, but there'll be a minimum of four. With over 100 Mission modes, Heart Attack and Time Attack arcade options it could have some long-term single-

You can cane eight Ferraris, including the Enzo and F50

There are only 15 tracks. Could do with some downloadable extras

The car models are pretty decent but not a patch on Gotham's or Burnout's. C'mon lads, keep up!

It's mentally quick and one of the sweetest and smoothest rides on Xbox, for sure

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Sega seems to be on track to succeed in dragging Outrun into the 21st century with its updated look and added Xbox Live multiplayer options. But we've got say it's still retro-styled, which could potentially put off speed junkies with a fetish for outrageously polished racers like Need For Speed: Underground – like CVG's Grazza.

EXCITE METER

SEGA SUPERSTARS

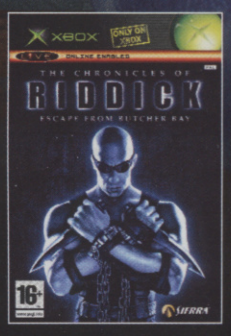
FLATTEN FIGHTING LEGENDS AND RACE WORLD FAMOUS RODENTS IN SEGA'S EYETOY DEBUT

Sega's boiled up a hotpot of fifteen EyeToy mini-games featuring an all-star cast of classic characters, including maraca maestro Samba De Amigo and Sonic The Hedgehog. You even get to appear on screen with Akira from Virtua Fighter series and flick his nipples!

The dark can't protect you.

"The best looking Xbox game we've ever seen. And we've seen them all."

Official Xbox Magazine



16+ www.pegi.info

UNIVERSAL SIERRA XBOX LIVE

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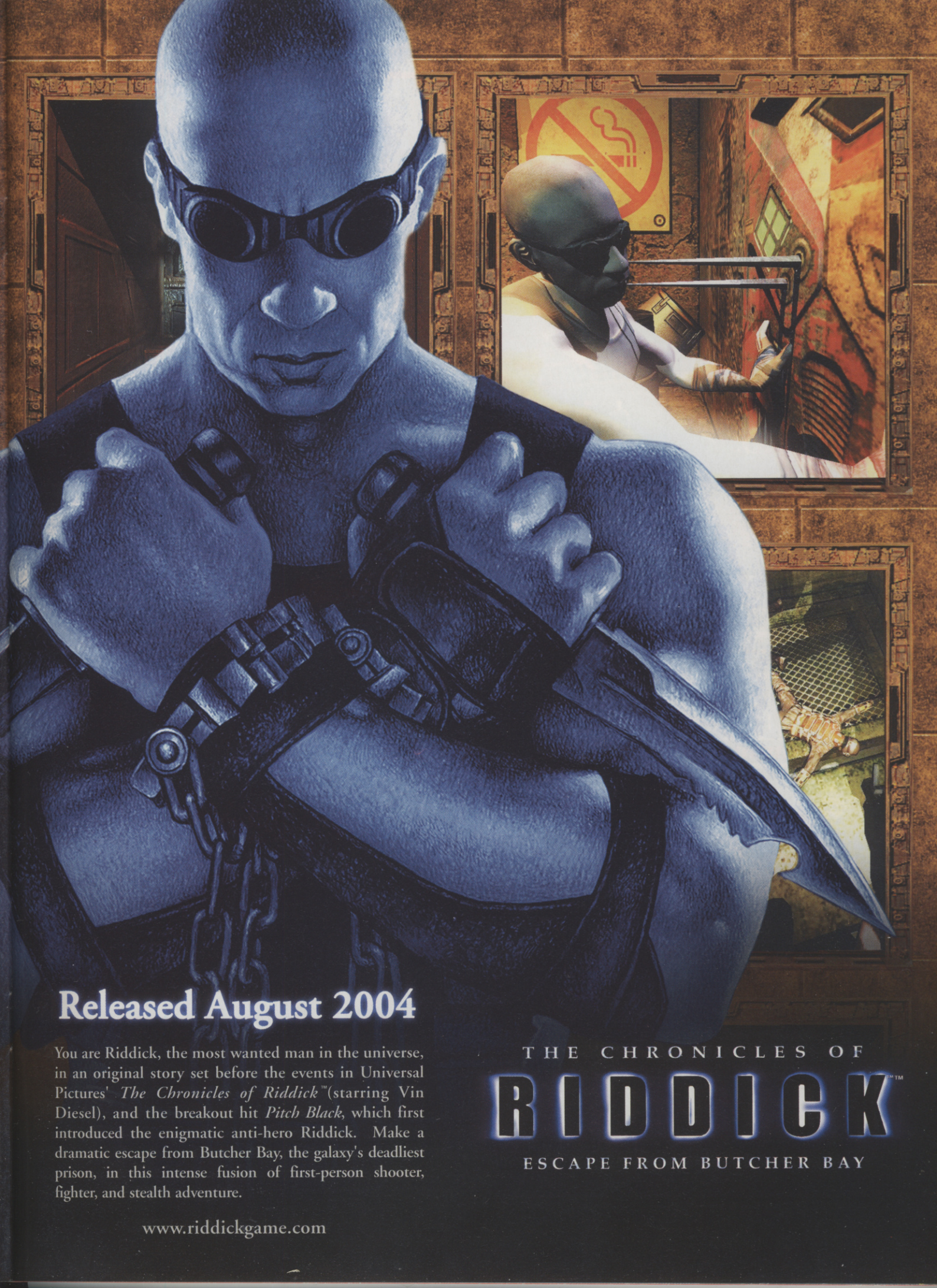


Released August 2004

You are Riddick, the most wanted man in the universe, in an original story set before the events in Universal Pictures' *The Chronicles of Riddick*™ (starring Vin Diesel), and the breakout hit *Pitch Black*, which first introduced the enigmatic anti-hero Riddick. Make a dramatic escape from Butcher Bay, the galaxy's deadliest prison, in this intense fusion of first-person shooter, fighter, and stealth adventure.

www.riddickgame.com

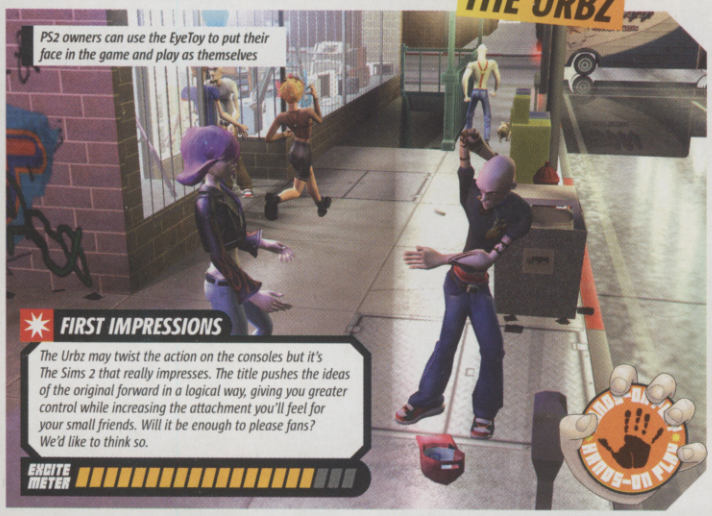
THE CHRONICLES OF

RIDDICK™

ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

Just to prove that it's really set in the city, here's a picture of a city street!

THE URBZ



PS2 owners can use the EyeToy to put their face in the game and play as themselves

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Urbz may twist the action on the consoles but it's The Sims 2 that really impresses. The title pushes the ideas of the original forward in a logical way, giving you greater control while increasing the attachment you'll feel for your small friends. Will it be enough to please fans? We'd like to think so.

EXCITE METER

THE URBZ & THE SIMS 2

THE SIMS GROW UP AND HEAD TO THE BIG CITY

ON: PS2, XBOX, PC, GC, GBA PUB: EA OUT: WINTER

Electronic Arts is lining up new additions to their Sims family, with The Sims 2 getting closer to release and consoles sporting a new challenge with The Urbz.

The Urbz takes the action out of the suburbs for the first time and heads into the heart of the big city. Another new direction for the series is that you now play with your Sims 24/7 – when they leave their apartments you go with them, taking full control of their actions at the workplace.

Jobs are suitably diverse, starting out in locations such as a sushi bar or fireworks shop. The aim is to increase your social stature, allowing you access to new districts, jobs and lifestyles. Ultimately the main prize is to become the biggest player in the city.

With all the new responsibilities to manage, The Sims 2 now boasts weekends. You can also book your Sim a holiday

THE SIMS 2

In The Sims 2 you'll have to tend to your Sim's aspirations and goals, along with its basic needs

Sims can now create a legacy, with children inheriting their parents' genes and characteristics

ADVANCE WARS: UNDER FIRE

MINI GBA MASTERPIECE GETS REAL-TIME

ON: GC PUB: NINTENDO OUT: 2005

Strategic masterpiece Advance Wars will make the big leap to GameCube next year with the release of Advance Wars: Under Fire.

The Cube version bends the turn-based strategy title into real-time 3D strategic action. Instead of overseeing battles you now control the heart of the action, arrange troops into squads and charge into frays with your best soldiers at your side.

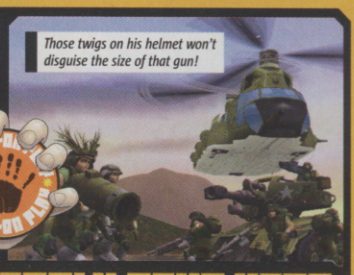
The battle isn't limited to what you see on screen, and neither is your control. While you bark at your unit, your other troops don't stand at ease – they respond to enemy attacks and try to defend any area where they've been deployed. You can switch between your troops at any time to give them new commands or take over a unit if the enemy launches an attack on it.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It's a shock to see one of our favourite GBA titles transformed into a 3D action title but we're trying to keep an open mind. Under Fire keeps a sprinkling of strategy and ramps up the action, with intense battles that retain the cool look of the GBA original. But will it work? We bloody well hope so or there'll be trouble...

EXCITE METER

Switch between units to get to the heart of the battle and take full control



Those twigs on his helmet won't disguise the size of that gun!

THE WAR BEGINS EARLY NEXT YEAR

Battle-hardened troops gain vital experience and can earn promotions, increasing their abilities

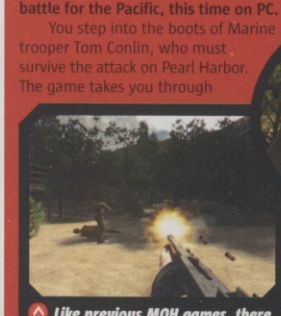
MEDAL OF HONOR: PACIFIC ASSAULT

CAN YOU SURVIVE THE ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR?

After failing to excite with last year's Rising Sun for consoles, EA and the Medal Of Honor team are having another stab at recreating the WWII battle for the Pacific, this time on PC.

You step into the boots of Marine trooper Tom Conlin, who must survive the attack on Pearl Harbor. The game takes you through battles from the Pacific Theatre Of Operations from 1941-44, including the assault of Guadalcanal and the climactic battle of Tarawa Atoll.

The game boasts a new 3D engine built especially for Pacific Assault and features multiplayer modes where 32 players can choose soldiers from American, British, Japanese and other armies.



Like previous MOH games, there are lots of opportunities for heroics

The new game engine provides cool explosions by the dozen

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Rising Sun may have failed to win us over but that didn't stop it from selling huge amounts. Expect Pacific Assault to get the series back on track, although with increasing competition this will be a pivotal entry in the series. Greater inclusion of allied heroics rather than solely American exploits would be a start.

EXCITE METER

ONE TO WATCH

These guys were late for the Half-Life 2 auditions

AREA 51

ON: PS2, XBOX PUB: MIDWAY OUT: WINTER

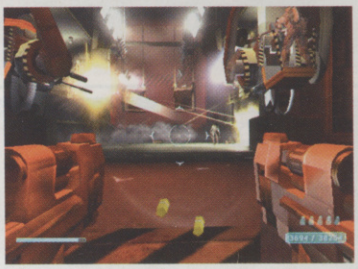
BLAST YOUR WAY THROUGH A SECRET YANK GOVERNMENT FACILITY – THE TRUTH IS IN THERE

Maybe we could use that fancy telescopic sight as an anal probe?

Conspiracy theories play a big part in Midway's new first-person shooter Area 51. Venturing into the top-secret military facility, you will learn about the infamous extraterrestrial crash at Roswell and faked lunar landings.

There's also a deadly viral outbreak to contend with that must be controlled before it leaks to the outside world. The same outbreak is causing you to slowly mutate into an alien and give you some strange new abilities.

With split-screen multiplayer, online support for both consoles and an alien menace designed by top Hollywood creature designer Stan Winston (who created monsters for Jurassic Park, Aliens and Predator), the battle for Area 51 could be scary stuff indeed.



Good job the US military put plenty of fancy hardware about the place

"A VIRAL OUTBREAK IS MUTATING YOU INTO AN ALIEN WITH STRANGE ABILITIES"

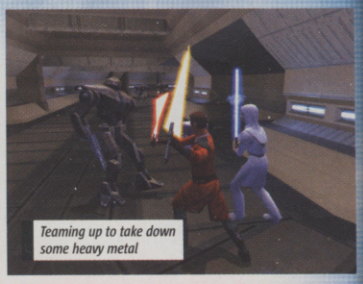
There's no time for scientific research when aliens threaten the world with extinction

HOT SHOT

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

There's more than a touch of Half-Life about Area 51, borrowing not only the viral outbreak from Valve's shooter but also the top secret military facility. The addition of government conspiracies and mutating alien abilities in the mix could make for a memorable shooter or a pale imitation – we'll have to wait and see.

EXCITE METER



Teaming up to take down some heavy metal

STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS

FIVE YEARS ON, THE GALAXY'S STILL IN TURMOIL

ON: XBOX, PC PUB: LUCASARTS OUT: EARLY 2005

The first Knights Of The Old Republic was RPG genius, so sequel The Sith Lords has got us touching our sabers.

Set five years after the original, the Jedi are on the brink of extinction and the Republic no longer has the strength to protect its worlds. Sith Assassins hunt the one they believe to be the last of the Jedi – you! Once again, you decide your path and choose between the Light and Dark Sides of The Force.

That's for ruining the prequels, Binks!

With returning characters, sinister new villains and over 30 new Force powers, The Sith Lords is shaping up to be a worthy sequel.

Force powers allow players to see through doors, view character alignment and turn weak-minded enemies against each other. There are seven alien worlds to visit including Telos, a wasteland being rebuilt after its destruction during the war in the original game.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

The Sith Lords is set to expand on everything that made the original KOTOR so great. Every area of gameplay is being tweaked with new characters, abilities, weapons, locations and combat strategies. Character customisation is greater than before and once again Xbox Live provides downloadable content at launch. The Force is still strong.

EXCITE METER

There are hundreds of new characters and lots of dopey robots to destroy

In 4,000 years the hairstyles in a galaxy far, far away haven't changed much

Those Jedi – if it wasn't cool enough to own a lightsaber, they can do acrobatics as well!

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC
PUB: ACTIVISION
OUT: SUMMER

Spider-Man must use an array of new moves to beat the crap out of some odd new foes

SPIDER-MAN 2

PETER PARKER SWINGS BACK INTO ACTION

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

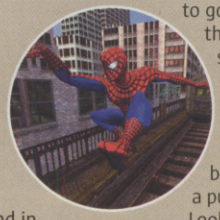
Being Spidey has never been so believable. The streets of Manhattan are excellently realised and provide a thrilling backdrop for all sorts of web-related antics. The big action scenes follow the plot of the forthcoming movie quite closely, but it's the smaller stuff like helping old ladies that the fans will really enjoy.

EXCITE METER

There are so many new features in Spider-Man 2 that the only thing it shares with the original is Spider-Man himself.

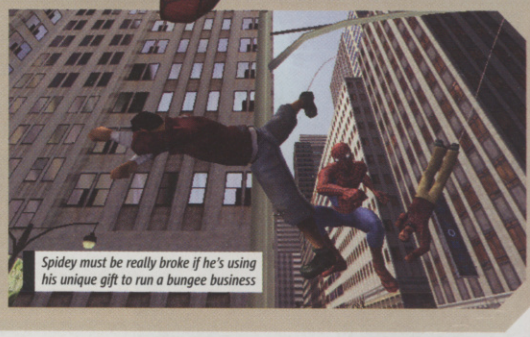
Spidey can now stroll around the streets of Manhattan at his leisure and interact with characters. He can also jump over 50 feet into the air and start web-swinging above rush hour traffic.

Then there's the city itself: full of tall buildings that web-head can crawl up, and in some cases keep crawling, as they go on forever.



Web-swinging through the streets is great fun and takes a bit of skill to master, especially if you want to go around a corner. Spidey can now also throw multiple weblines, allowing him to snag gangs of enemies in one cool move.

Spider-Man really is the friendly neighbourhood type, and Manhattan teems with petty crooks. An exclamation mark appears over the head of someone in bother, offering mini-tasks such as rescuing a purse or retrieving a balloon for a crying boy. Look out for more swinging action in a future thrill-packed issue of your friendly neighbourhood CVG.



Spidey must be really broke if he's using his unique gift to run a bungee business

DUKES OF HAZZARD: RETURN OF GENERAL LEE

Humerous mission-based red-neck racer with TV show tie-in

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: OCTOBER

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

Squad based shooter in a full-scale North Korean battlezone

ON: PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, PC
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: AUTUMN

THE MATRIX ONLINE

Action-packed online RPG set just after the movies' end

ON: PC
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: WINTER

MEN OF VALOR: THE VIETNAM WAR

More ex-Medal of Honor guys move the FPS action to Vietnam

ON: XBOX, PC
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: 2005

TIM BURTON'S NIGHTMARE BEFORE XMAS

Platformer based on the darkly comic animated movie

ON: GBA
PUB: CAPCOM
OUT: WINTER

GAME BLITZ

AND THE NEW GAMES JUST KEEP ON COMING...

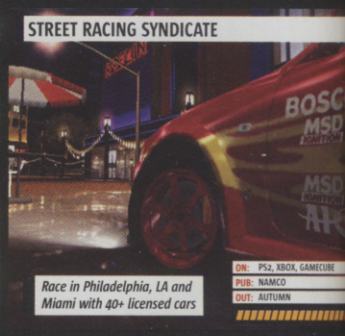
Phew! There were that many hot new games at E3 this year we've run out of pages! So to ensure you still get a glimpse of other gaming beauties heading your way we'll have to give 'em the Kylie treatment – short but swee-eet!

PIKMIN 2

Unique real-time strategy, this time with two lead characters

ON: GAMECUBE
PUB: NINTENDO
OUT: AUTUMN

STREET RACING SYNDICATE



Race in Philadelphia, LA and Miami with 40+ licensed cars

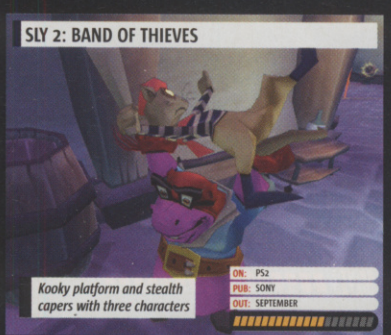
ON: PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: AUTUMN

SILENT HILL 4

Alternative first and third-person survival horror sequel

ON: PS2, XBOX, PC
PUB: KONAMI
OUT: SEPTEMBER

SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES



Kooky platform and stealth capers with three characters

ON: PS2
PUB: SONY
OUT: SEPTEMBER

STAR WARS GALAXIES

Engage in intergalactic dogfights in this online RPG expansion

ON: PC
PUB: LUCASARTS
OUT: AUTUMN

STARSHIP TROOPERS

Join up with the Roughnecks and battle a blizzard of bugs

ON: XBOX, PC
PUB: EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
OUT: WINTER

STAR FOX 2

FOX MCCLOUD AND THAT TALKING TOAD ARE BACK

Team Star Fox is getting ready for another round of air and land combat as they tackle a new enemy that threatens the inhabitants of the solar system.

Joining Fox McCloud are stalwarts Slippy Toad, Peppy Hare and Falco Lombardi along with new faces to create the most formidable team yet seen in the series: the Star Fox armada!

The game boasts aerial combat at the controls of an Arwing, devastating land attacks at the helm of a Landmaster Tank and masses of enemies on foot. Four-player co-operative play allows you to ride on the wing of an Arwing while a friend pilots.

The co-op mode looks to provide all kinds of action

For the land missions, you're far better off in a tank than on foot

The space combat sections look like the most impressive in the series so far

This time it's fox doing the hunting. The Landmaster's big gun takes big chunks out of big baddies

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

While Star Fox 2 may not be as exciting as the prospect of a new Zelda on the Cube, there's sure to be many fans of the classic series rubbing their hands at the prospect of another intense mix of space combat and land battles. The co-operative multiplayer should give the series a good push in the right direction.

EXCITE METER

THE LORD OF THE RINGS

ENTER THE THIRD AGE AND BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH

With EA running out of movies to convert into games, they've had an excellent idea of getting extra gaming mileage out of the Lord Of The Rings series.

The Third Age sees a new cast of characters embark on adventures in Middle Earth, allowing you to build a new fellowship to tackle the forces of evil. A very cool twist is the addition of unlockable evil content that allows you to fight for the forces of Sauron.

While previous console Rings games were simple hack 'n' slash fun, this takes the form of an RPG with a turn-based battle system. And battling a Balrog in the Mines of Moria, defending the fallen city of Osgiliath or battling with Sauron for Helm's Deep should make players feel in familiar company.

BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH

We've also got space to squeeze in a few shots of the excellent-looking real-time strategy Rings game for PC, The Battle For Middle Earth. We wants it!

That's a big army - shame they couldn't get more flowery uniforms

Beware the attack of the shiny bearded men!

MORTAL KOMBAT DECEPTION

The classic beat 'em up gets a whole new makeover

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: MIDWAY
OUT: WINTER

MOSCOW RUSH

Imagine GTA III set in Moscow, and made by Russian developers

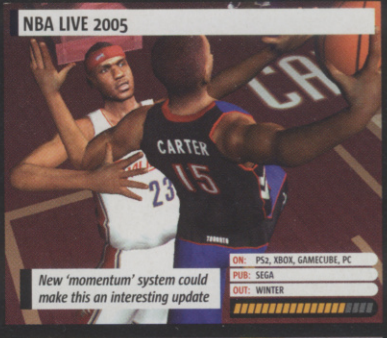
ON: PC
PUB: BUKA
OUT: TBC

NARC

Are you good cop or bad cop in this free-roaming 3D actioner?

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: MIDWAY
OUT: WINTER

NBA LIVE 2005



New 'momentum' system could make this an interesting update

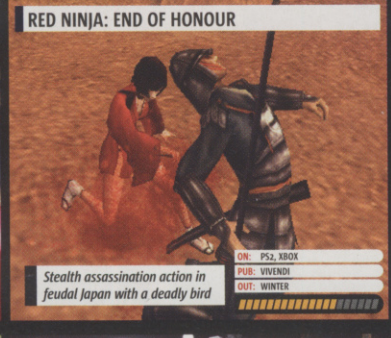
ON: PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE, PC
PUB: SEGA
OUT: WINTER

POWERDROME

Fast-as-fek futuristic racer that disposes with guns and pick-ups

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: EVOLVED
OUT: AUTUMN

RED NINJA: END OF HONOUR



Stealth assassination action in feudal Japan with a deadly bird

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: VIVENDI
OUT: WINTER

ROCKY LEGENDS

Prequel to last year's punch 'em up with improved Career mode

ON: PS2, XBOX
PUB: UBISOFT
OUT: AUTUMN

SHADE: WRATH OF ANGELS

Horror-tinged 3rd person action-adventure with multiple endings

ON: PC
PUB: CENEGA
OUT: OCTOBER

THE INCREDIBLES

Pixar movie 3D action platformer with multiple playable characters

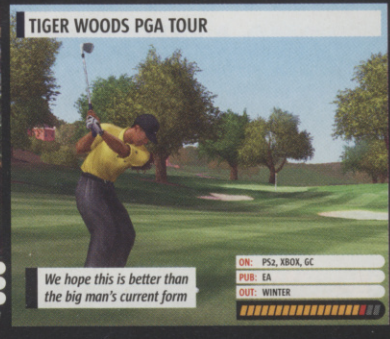
ON: PS2
PUB: THQ
OUT: NOVEMBER

THE MOVIES

Become a Hollywood big-shot in this Sims-style movie maker

ON: PC
PUB: ACTIVISION
OUT: WINTER

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR



We hope this is better than the big man's current form

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC
PUB: EA
OUT: WINTER

TIME CRISIS: CRISIS ZONE

Slick double lightgun action, this time set in London

ON: PS2
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: SEPTEMBER

XBOX LIVE

EA GOES LIVE

FORTHCOMING EA TITLES TO SUPPORT XBOX LIVE

Two of gaming's biggest players have finally teamed up. EA appeared at Microsoft's E3 conference to announce that their future Xbox games will include full Live support.

Up until now EA games have only been playable online on PS2, so this news is a huge boost to Xbox's online catalogue. Voice communication has been confirmed along with online tournaments, ladders and leagues.

The first game to support Live will be Yank football sim NCAA 2005, due for release in June, followed by a slew of other sports titles including Tiger Woods 2005, FIFA 2005, Madden NFL 2005 and NHL 2005. Xbox owners will finally be able to tee off against players from around the world in TW or take part in global FIFA leagues. Yup: sweet!

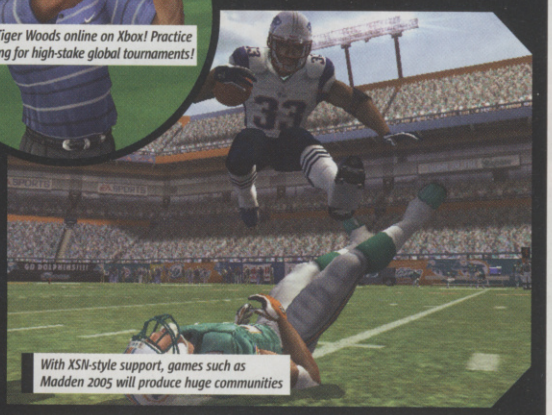
FIFA 2004's online mode was a bit crap on PS2, but FIFA 2005 on Live could be footie heaven – at least until Pro Evo Online...

Finally: Tiger Woods online on Xbox! Practice your swing for high-stake global tournaments!

LIVE AND DIRECT

And it's not just sports games: with EA's line-up including such monster titles as GoldenEye: Rogue Agent, Burnout 3, NFS: Underground 2 and TimeSplitters: Future Perfect, Live support means that we can expect some truly amazing online action!

Microsoft's own XSN Sports Network and games such as Project Gotham Racing 2 and Rainbow Six 3 have shown how popular online Xbox gaming can be. With the addition of big-selling EA titles we reckon that this could be the partnership that sends online console gaming through the roof.

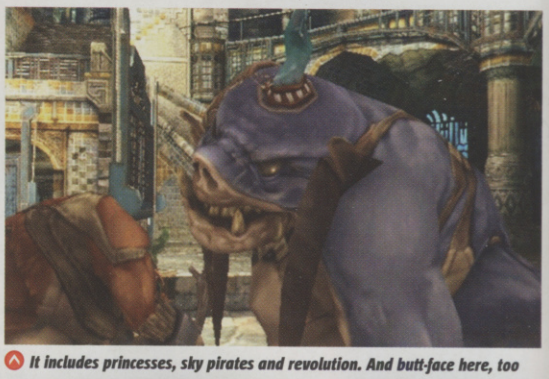


With XSN-style support, games such as Madden 2005 will produce huge communities

Burnout 3's six-player online modes are going to be awesome, and Xbox Live support means you can expect Gotham 2-style rankings

Log onto Live and get humped by Americans at NBA Live 2005

FF12 reunites us with such bods as Vaan, Fran and Ashe

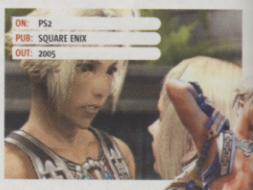


It includes princesses, sky pirates and revolution. And butt-face here, too

Dalmascan troops plan to overthrow the ruling Archadian government

FINAL FANTASY 11 & 12

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN BEGINS, WITH ALL-NEW FF12 OUT NEXT YEAR



If you ask CVG (oh, please do ask CVG), the next Final Fantasy game could be among the series' best. Having played it, we can say the visuals look stupendous. But more importantly, for the first time in the series the game will be taking a much more free-form approach.

Out goes the old linear style of story-telling where you were more or less forced to go from A to B, and in comes an adventure where you call the shots over where to head and what to do next. One of the top bods behind this new outing was responsible for FF Tactics (FF12 takes place in Ivalice, the same world as Tactics) and PSone turn-based hack 'n' slash classic Vagrant Story, which suggests a top-notch combat system if nothing else.

The other good news is that FF11 finally has a European release date (12 August), as well as an expansion pack called Chains Of Promathia on the way – though there's no telling when that'll reach our shores.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Final Fantasy 12 is more gorgeous than ever, just like we've come to expect. The way that the open-ended adventure develops is like watching a crazy-ass rap battle – you just don't know where the plot is gonna take you next. And this free-form gameplay could really open some doors in what we expect from a FF game.

EXCITE METER

The new engine means that the lightning-fast fight scenes, pyrotechnic special effects and grimly beautiful environments will leave you weeping tears of blood-stained joy

The plot tells of how Dante had to defeat his own twisted brother before DMC1

Devil May Cry 3

ON: PS2 PUB: CAPCOM OUT: Q4 2004

JUST ONE VISIT TO DANTE'S NEW INFERNO WAS ENOUGH TO LEAVE US BLUBBING FOR MORE!

The creatures this time round are as vicious as ever – only now in unimaginably large swarms!

Satan rules! Or at least, this particular Devil does. Telling the tale of how demon-slayer Dante had to defeat his evil brother in a prequel to the original game, Devil May Cry 3 looks an awesome return to form for our hero and his spectacular demon-destroying antics.

In the biggest change to the gameplay, at the start of each mission you have to choose a fighting style to use. There are currently four styles, but Capcom may add more. Swordmaster turns Dante into a samurai-standard blade-swinging Bill-Killer, capable of some incredible hacking and slashing attacks. For firepower, Gunslinger lets Dante fill his foes full of lead from a range of John Woo-style double-handgun firing stances. Trickster specialises in acrobatic attacks and dodges, with Dante running up walls and doing backflips.

And then there's Royal Guard, a more defensive style with the emphasis on parrying and counter-attacks. You can upgrade your skills in each style, keeping a good balance between the lot of them, or concentrating on becoming absolute master of one. Oh baby!

To make things even better, they've reavamped the already eye-searing visuals from scratch. They are also sorting out the camera system, which was a bit of a nightmare in the earlier games, hopefully introducing a tracking camera mode for when the crap hits the air-con.

As it's a prequel, Dante looks younger than ever. Still got that evil boyband style, though

Up to four weapons can be equipped at once (including a guitar!) for some amazing combos

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

This latest version of DMC should be a welcome return to form after the disappointing second game. The controls and camera system feel so comfortable and intuitive, but the fighting styles are what really shine out, with the RPG-like levelling-up system making the action all the more gripping as you progress through the amazing-looking levels.

EXCITE METER

E3 MEGA GAMES OVERLOAD!

MORE NEAT NUGGETS OF GAMING GOODNESS HEADING YOUR WAY

TEEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2

ON: PS2, XBOX, GC, PC, GBA
PUB: KONAMI
OUT: OCTOBER

TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER 2

ON: PS2, GBA
PUB: EA
OUT: TBC

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2

ON: XBOX
PUB: ATARI
OUT: WINTER

WARHAMMER ONLINE

ON: PC
PUB: SEGA
OUT: LATE 2004

XENOSAGA EPISODE II

ON: PS2
PUB: NAMCO
OUT: 2005

X-MEN LEGENDS

ON: PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE
PUB: ACTIVISION
OUT: OCTOBER

CUTTING EDGE ACTION.

ONLY ON XBOX

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"Arguably the finest-looking console game ever..." The Mirror

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NINJA GAIDEN | XBOX

it's good to play together

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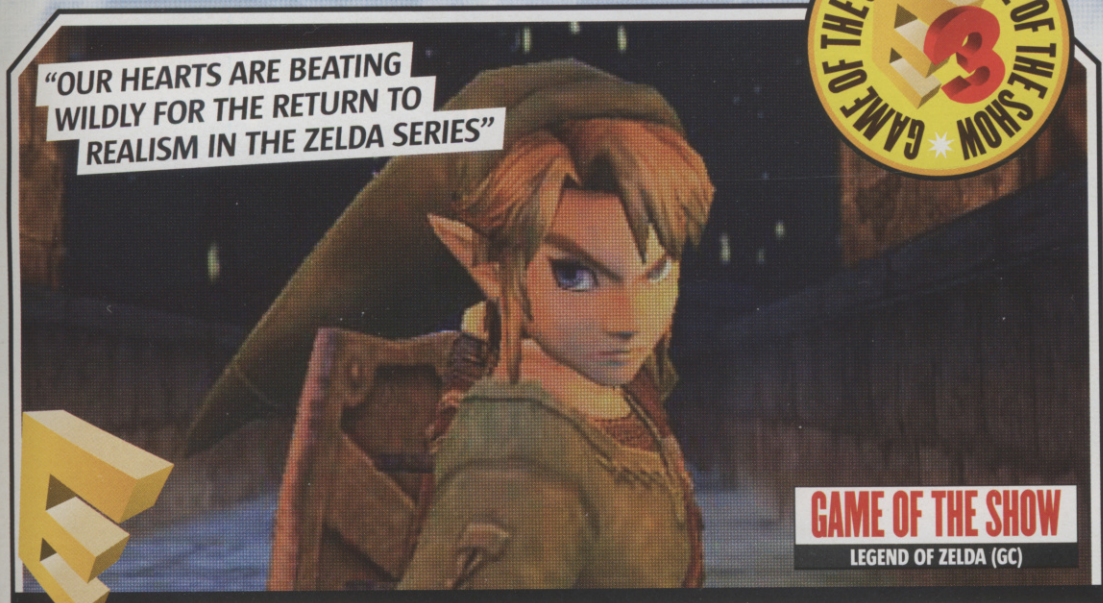

E3 BEST OF THE BEST

PLANET CVG ROUNDS UP THE BIGGEST HITTERS OF THIS YEAR'S MONSTER E3 SHOW – AND DISHES OUT SOME SILVERWARE

AND THE REST...

MOST BOOT-IFUL BOOTH BABE
(ONE ON THE LEFT)
We were so dumbstruck by how scrummy she was that we forgot to ask what her what her name was – not that we care.

SICKEST GAME
THE PUNISHER
Stuffing people into woodchippers, enemies getting their faces bitten off by piranhas and burying meat cleavers into noses!

MOST ORIGINAL GAME
BALLOON TRIP (N DS)
Although it's only a tech demo, it's genius. Drawing a path of clouds for Baby Mario to collect coins and keep him safe from enemies! Brilliantly simple and utterly satisfying.

BIGGEST DISAPPOINTMENT
ADVANCE WARS: UNDER FIRE (GC)
It looks like one of the famously shit Army Men games on PSone, and doesn't play much better. We can't believe it.

BEST MULTIPLAYER GAME
HALO 2
Mike and Paul played it for almost an hour, and were so hooked they had to be dragged away by their ankles.

BEST STAND AT THE SHOW
PLAYSTATION
PSP was the major attraction, snaking out hour-long queues just for a quick fondle and hands-on play.

QUOTE OF THE SHOW
"AAOOAAOOWW, TAKE IT!"
Bungie nerd has an orgasm as he demos hijacking a Ghost in Halo 2.

TEAM CVG'S PERSONAL PICKS OF THE SHOW

MIKE: HALO 2
"I almost popped my wad when Microsoft granted me behind-closed-doors access to play Halo 2 mutliplayer at E3! It was a five-on-five Capture The Flag session, flipping between attackers and defenders on the all new Zanzibar level and I got to play as both Master Chief and the Elite Covenant soldier. It totally blew me away. The new vehicle damage system is outstanding, the dual weapon thing is awesome, and it just looks unbelievable. There's nothing like it, and I truly believe that there never will be in Xbox's lifetime."

PAUL: LEGEND OF ZELDA (GC)
"Although it wasn't playable, the new GameCube Zelda was the only game that I fully responded to at E3. Terrific though Wind Waker is, this new Zelda is the one fans have been crying out for. Link, now more grown up, looks the absolute hero resplendent in his armour. Scenes of Link galloping through a battlefield on his trusty steed, Epona (we presume), swinging at enemies with his sword are now branded on my heart. It was like watching scenes from Return Of The King, and I really felt that this was a return to glory for one of Nintendo's best-loved characters."

ALEX: LEGEND OF ZELDA (GC)
"It has to be Zelda, but not for the obvious visual reason. Sure, the new graphical style craps all over Wind Waker's cel-shaded nonsense, and it looks absolutely gorgeous as Link canters through the sunlit forest. But I'm most excited because it looks like it'll return to Hyrule and therefore have more in common with Ocarina Of Time, with horse-riding and awesome battles across rolling plains. I can't wait!"

GRAEME: FORZA MOTORSPORT (XBOX)
"Forza's sexy physics and seductive customisation options are definitely beeping my horn. Tuning up my motor EXACTLY how I want it then going mental on the bodywork with decals and paint jobs will be amazing, plus the realistic handling feels great. Forza could take driving games to the next level."

PETE: GT4 MOBILE (PSP)
"Finally seeing the wee fekker up and running was nothing short of stunning. It's the greatest racing series on the most exciting new bit of hardware – that's a killer combination. Imagine playing Gran Turismo looking THAT good out in the street! If you can rip tunes too, then they can have my pre-order right now. This just sums up everything that's so exciting about PSP."

JAIME: PSP
"Nothing's more exciting than a new console being revealed, and this year's E3 had two! DS looks great, and I think it's cool that Nintendo has tried to do something innovative, but there's only be one place my money's going. I just can't believe how amazing the PSP games look – like PS2 games basically, and the screen's massive too. Pro Evo Wi-Fi... Awesome!"

COURAGE MIGHT FAIL

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Harry Potter AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN™

PLAY AS HARRY, RON AND

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Charts

UK TOP 20 BESTSELLERS

FIND OUT WHICH GAMES ARE FLYING OFF THE SHELVES AND WHICH ARE NOSE-DIVING INTO OBSCURITY, HOW THEY SCORED IN CVG AND WHAT WE RECKON TO THEM NOW

ChartTrack — The official UK weekly leisure software charts © 2002 ELSPA Ltd, compiled by ChartTrack, with the name ELSPA acting as a link to the website www.elspa.com

POSITION	MOVE	GAME	FORMAT/S	CVG SCORE	SUMMARY	LAST WEEK	WEEKS IN CHART
1	NEW	TOCA RACE DRIVER 2 (CODEMASTERS)	XB PC	91%	1-12 player Xbox Live clashes, 15 motorsports and damage that affects performance. Does for track racing what Gotham 2 did for street action.	-	1
2	↑	NORTON INTERNET SECURITY 2004 (NORTON)	PC	-	Another killer month for Norton's virus vanquisher. Rumour has it that the 2005 version will come with a light gun so you can blast your own bugs!	3	19
3	↓	SONIC HEROES (SEGA)	PS2 XB GC	62%	It's been three months and Sega's roly-poly rodent has proved that he's still got star quality, racking up another week in the top three.	1	12
4	→	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW (UBISOFT)	XB GBA	94%	If you've got access to Xbox Live make this your next buy. The multiplayer is utterly unique and absolutely the tensest stealth experience ever!	4	5
5	→	JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING (EA)	PS2 XB GC GBA	83%	Some of the most ridiculous adrenaline-charged scenarios ever to occur in the land of Bond! Also you get to massage heavenly bootie. Ding dong!	5	9
6	↓	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY (ACCLAIM)	PS2 XB	62%	Okay, no gags about heaps of Vaseline-covered guys scrumming down over funny-shaped balls, or studs in painful places... Oops, ran out of space.	2	3
7	↓	FIFA 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB GBA GC PS1	79%	FIFA 2004 is riding high and UEFA Euro 2004 has just gone on sale. EA is set to score big-time in the run-up to Euro 2004, which kicks off on 12 June.	6	27
8	↓	LMA MANAGER 2004 (CODEMASTERS)	PS2 XB	81%	Footie management games can be as intimidating as Roy Keane's Rottweilers, but LMA is ultra-friendly. You'll be fluent in footie strategy within hours.	7	7
9	↓	THE SIMS (EA)	PC PS2 XB	85%	EA's original manipulation masterpiece has gone budget on PC, on sale now for just under 20 quid. Not much of a looker any more, but still plays sweet.	8	43
10	↓	THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004 (SONY)	PS2	36%	It's a crying shame that the only footie franchise that isn't being scoffed off the shelves at the moment is Pro Evo.	9	5
11	→	THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN (VIVENDI)	PS2 XB GC PC	67%	We had predicted Hit & Run would leap out of the charts this month, but Homer hangs in and continues to smash up the streets of Springfield.	11	26
12	↑	FAR CRY (UBISOFT)	PC	91%	We love the epic scale of Ubisoft's paradise blaster and scrapping it out with super-intelligent enemies. Can't wait for the forthcoming console spin-offs.	14	5
13	→	NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND (EA)	PS2 XB	91%	It's been on sale for over six months and has yet to be out-classed by any other racer out there. The sequel could crush the competition for good.	13	23
14	NEW	TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (KONAMI)	PS2 XB PC GBA	46%	Konami's Ninja Turdholes have flipped straight into the top 20, spraying their musky amphibian scent all over Vice City. Tommy's not going to be pleased.	-	1
15	RE ENTRY	GRAND THEFT AUTO: VICE CITY – PLATINUM (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 PC	95%	Man, still nothing can touch it! We've been replaying Vice City since news of San Andreas and it's seriously tough to imagine how SA can be better.	12	61
16	RE ENTRY	MANHUNT (ROCKSTAR)	PS2 XB PC	72%	Rockstar's grizzly gut-churner splats onto Xbox and re-enters the charts. Stealth-wise it's no Splinter Cell PT, but it oozes attitude by the bucket-load.	-	5
17	↓	TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 (EA)	PS2 XB GC PC	89%	Tiger suffers from its putting, and the fact that you can't read and play the greens – like Links 2004 – is a mistake. Otherwise, awesome fun.	15	21
18	↓	THE CAT IN THE HAT (VIVENDI)	PS2 XB	-	Dr Seuss' big screen romp starring Mike Myers gets the spin-off treatment on console. It looks like cat vomit though – steer clear.	10	2
19	↓	SPLINTER CELL – PLATINUM/XBOX CLASSICS (UBISOFT)	PS2 XB PC	89%	Considering that you can buy the Xbox version for £12.99 – less than the price of a CD – there's absolutely no excuse to not own this classic.	17	42
20	NEW	DRIVING TEST SUCCESS THEORY 03/04 (FOCUS ESSENTIAL)	PC	-	So what the hell are we supposed to say about this one? It's a frickin' piece of software to help you pass your driving theory test. Wonderful.	-	12

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CVG MOST WANTED

1. HALO 2 (XB)
Paul: "I stared at Halo 2 in disbelief – it looks so much better than even the original game. The multiplayer is ingenious, especially now that vehicles take damage."

2. METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES (GC)
Mike: "Another gargantuan adventure, now with added mind-bending multiplayer action. The lock-on targeting actually works in multiplayer."

3. GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS (PS2)
Alex: "The biggest game on the planet needs no introduction. Only 151 days until it goes on sale in the UK!"

4. GRAND TURISMO 4 (PS2)
Graeme: "I've caned my copy of GT4 Prologue to death. GT4's going to plug a banana in the exhaust pipe of every other racer this year."

5. GT4: MOBILE (PSP)
Pete: "Un-be-freakin'-lievable! Had to jam sticks into my eyes a couple of times to make sure they were working proper like after seeing this in motion at E3. PSP roolz!"

READERS' MOST WANTED

John Upchurch poured over last month's E3 Big 50 news special and handpicked this quality quintet of upcoming stunners.

1. GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS (PS2)
"More motors, cooler settings, madder missions! Oh yeah!"

2. METROID PRIME 2: ECHOES (GC)
"Metroid Prime is my favourite Nintendo game of all time."

3. HALO 2 (XB)
"I'm going to get broadband and Xbox Live just for this!"

4. ZELDA (GC)
"I'm really praying that Miyamoto makes this one harder."

5. TIMESPLITTERS 3 (XB)
"TS2 is the best multiplayer shooter ever."

Send us a photo of yourself and a list of the five games you're most excited about, with 15 words on each explaining why.
Readers' Most Wanted, CVG, Dennis Publishing Ltd, 9 Dallington Street, London EC1V 0BQ. Email: mailbag.cvg @dennis.co.uk (subject: Most Wanted)

'KING HELL, IT'S ARTHUR

Konami has peeled open the poop chute in it's shiny gaming armour to squeeze out the first screens from it's new game based on the upcoming movie

King Arthur. Must've been painful as they look dead gritty – and wicked cool! Gameplay will have you swinging into sword fights as legendary heroes Arthur, Lancelot and even two-timing Guinevere. There's even co-op mode for two. Out on PS2, Xbox and GC this Christmas.

RELEASE DATES

CUT OUT AND KEEP

CVG BRINGS YOU THE ULTIMATE CUT-OUT-AND-KEEP RELEASE SCHEDULE. MARK UP YOUR FAVES AND KEEP THIS LIST ON YOU AT ALL TIMES...

JUNE 2004

			I WANT IT
PC	BLITZKRIEG: BURNING HORIZONS	04 JUNE	
PS2	COMBAT ELITE WWII PARATROOPERS	04 JUNE	
PS2	DRIV3R	04 JUNE	
XB	DRIV3R	04 JUNE	
PC	FAIR STRIKE	04 JUNE	
GBA	F-ZERO: GP LEGEND	04 JUNE	
PC	OUTFRONT	04 JUNE	
PC	GREAT BRITISH DIESELS	04 JUNE	
PS2	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN	04 JUNE	
XB	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN	04 JUNE	
PC	LEGENDS OF WRESTLING: SHOWDOWN	04 JUNE	
PC	RAINBOW SIX GOLD	04 JUNE	
PS2	PERFECT ACE 2: THE CHAMPIONSHIPS	04 JUNE	
PC	THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS	04 JUNE	
XB	THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS	04 JUNE	
PC	ULTIMATE TRAFFIC	04 JUNE	
PC	WARLORDS BATTLECRY 3	04 JUNE	
PS2	HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	04 JUNE	
XB	HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	04 JUNE	
GC	HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	04 JUNE	
PC	HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	04 JUNE	
GBA	HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN	04 JUNE	
PS2	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	11 JUNE	
PC	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	11 JUNE	
GC	SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW	11 JUNE	
XB	GALLEON	11 JUNE	
PS2	RISK: GLOBAL DOMINATION	11 JUNE	
PS2	MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3	11 JUNE	
XB	MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3	11 JUNE	
GC	SAMURAI JACK	11 JUNE	
PC	AIRBUS PROFESSIONAL	18 JUNE	
GC	MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR	18 JUNE	
PS2	SHREK 2	18 JUNE	
GC	SHREK 2	18 JUNE	
XB	SHREK 2	18 JUNE	
PC	SHREK 2	18 JUNE	
GBA	SHREK 2	18 JUNE	
XB	BREAKDOWN	18 JUNE	
PS2	RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK	18 JUNE	
PS2	.HACK MUTATION	18 JUNE	
PC	BESIEGER	18 JUNE	
PC	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2004	18 JUNE	
PS2	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2004	18 JUNE	
XB	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2004	18 JUNE	
GC	RAINBOW SIX 3	24 JUNE	
PC	AMERICA'S MOST WANTED	24 JUNE	
PS2	SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67	25 JUNE	
XB	SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67	25 JUNE	
PC	SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67	25 JUNE	
GC	ASTERIX & OBELIX XXL	25 JUNE	
GBA	ASTERIX & OBELIX XXL	25 JUNE	
PC	ASTERIX & OBELIX XXL	25 JUNE	
PS2	CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST	25 JUNE	
GBA	DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2	25 JUNE	
GBA	SONIC ADVANCE 3	25 JUNE	
XB	SUDEKI	25 JUNE	
PC	CONSPIRACY	25 JUNE	
XB	SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY	25 JUNE	
PC	SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY	25 JUNE	
PS2	GHOST MASTER	25 JUNE	
XB	GHOST MASTER	25 JUNE	
GBA	CRASH BANDICOOT FUSION	25 JUNE	
GBA	SPYRO FUSION	25 JUNE	
PS2	FORMULA CHALLENGE	25 JUNE	

THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS

"Garret, the original stealth hero, returns for more sneakin' and teefin' this month. Great game, if you can find it..."

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

"Tough as old boots but contagious none the less, the latest Syphon Filter is just the thing for those virulent nights"

HOT PICKS

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THESE SIZZLING NEWCOMERS IN YOUR LOCAL GAMES SHACK

MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

"Fore! It might not win any prizes for authenticity, but Mario's breezy approach to golf is joyfully rewarding"

CONFLICT: VIETNAM

"Conflict: Vietnam takes the survival horror genre and gives it a history lesson. Brutal, haunting, unnerving stuff"

GTA: SAN ANDREAS

"Freakin' hell, this is gonna be bigger than Notorious B.I.G. – scratch that, it's the most anticipated videogame EVER"

PC	GOOKA: THE MYSTERY OF JANATRIS	25 JUNE	
PS2	SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN	25 JUNE	
GBA	FIRE EMBLEM	26 JUNE	
PC	MASHED	JUNE	
PS2	MASHED	JUNE	
XB	MASHED	JUNE	
PS2	FORMULA ONE 04	JUNE	
PS2	SAMURAI WARRIORS	JUNE	
PS2	NAVAL OPS: COMMANDER	JUNE	

JULY 2004

			I WANT IT
XB	FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR	02 JULY	
PC	GROUND CONTROL 2: OPERATION EXODUS	02 JULY	
PS2	SPIDER-MAN 2	09 JULY	
XB	SPIDER-MAN 2	09 JULY	
GC	SPIDER-MAN 2	09 JULY	
PC	SPIDER-MAN 2	09 JULY	
GBA	SPIDER-MAN 2	09 JULY	
PS2	SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM	09 JULY	
XB	SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM	09 JULY	
PS2	BLOOD WILL TELL	09 JULY	
PC	AURA	16 JULY	
PS2	LEGEND OF KAY	23 JULY	
PS2	CATWOMAN	30 JULY	
XB	CATWOMAN	30 JULY	
GC	CATWOMAN	30 JULY	
GBA	CATWOMAN	30 JULY	
PC	CATWOMAN	30 JULY	
GBA	DEFENDER OF THE CROWN	30 JULY	
XB	HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS – XBOX CLASSICS	30 JULY	
GBA	WINGS ADVANCE	30 JULY	
GC	MICRO MAYHEM	JULY	

AUGUST 2004

			I WANT IT
XB	THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK	13 AUGUST	
PS2	ALTERED BEAST	13 AUGUST	
XB	RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW	20 AUGUST	
PC	CRUSADER KINGS	27 AUGUST	
XB	VULTURES	27 AUGUST	

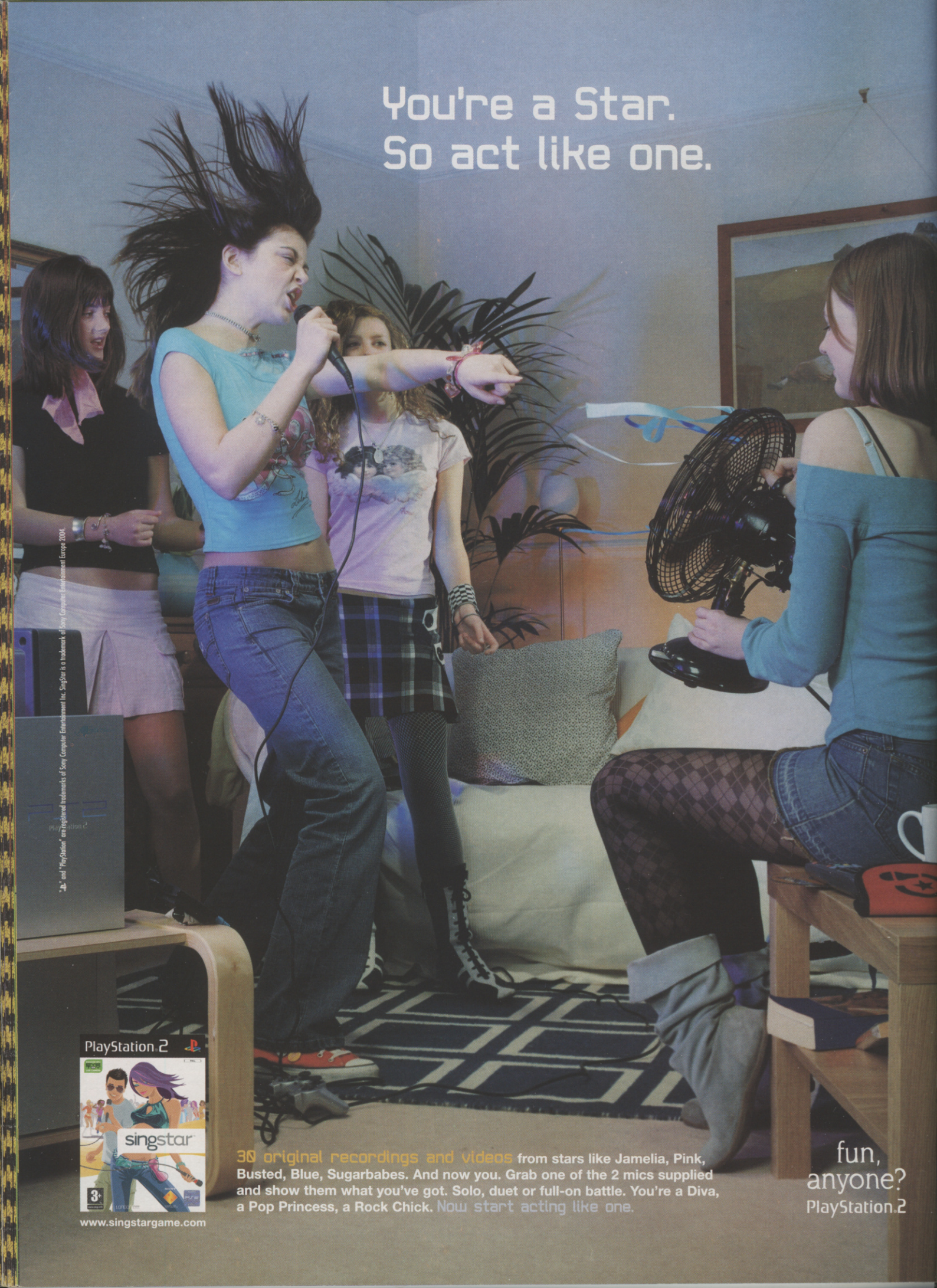
SEPTEMBER 2004

			I WANT IT
PS2	CONFLICT: VIETNAM	01 SEPTEMBER	
XB	CONFLICT: VIETNAM	01 SEPTEMBER	
PC	CONFLICT: VIETNAM	01 SEPTEMBER	
XB	PSI-OPS	01 SEPTEMBER	
PC	PSI-OPS	01 SEPTEMBER	
PC	SUPERPOWER 2	01 SEPTEMBER	
XB	TERMINATOR 3: REDEMPTION	01 SEPTEMBER	
PS2	TERMINATOR 3: REDEMPTION	01 SEPTEMBER	
GC	TERMINATOR 3: REDEMPTION	01 SEPTEMBER	
PS2	JUICED	03 SEPTEMBER	
XB	JUICED	03 SEPTEMBER	
PC	JUICED	03 SEPTEMBER	
GBA	MEGAMAN BATTLE NETWORK 4: BLUE MOON	03 SEPTEMBER	
GBA	MEGAMAN BATTLE NETWORK 4: RED SUN	03 SEPTEMBER	
GBA	MEGAMAN ZERO 3	03 SEPTEMBER	
PC	MYST 4: REVELATION	10 SEPTEMBER	
PC	CREATURE CONFLICT	17 SEPTEMBER	
PC	CODENAME PANZERS	24 SEPTEMBER	
PS2	NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL	24 SEPTEMBER	
GC	NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL	24 SEPTEMBER	
XB	NEIGHBOURS FROM HELL	24 SEPTEMBER	
XB	PILOT DOWN	24 SEPTEMBER	
PC	SILENT HUNTER 3	24 SEPTEMBER	

OCTOBER 2004

			I WANT IT
PC	SHARK TALE	01 OCTOBER	
PS2	THE BARD'S TALE	02 OCTOBER	
XB	THE BARD'S TALE	02 OCTOBER	
PC	THE BARD'S TALE	02 OCTOBER	
PS2	GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS	22 OCTOBER	
PS2	X-MEN LEGENDS	22 OCTOBER	
XB	X-MEN LEGENDS	22 OCTOBER	
GC	X-MEN LEGENDS	22 OCTOBER	
PS2	CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR	29 OCTOBER	
XB	CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR	29 OCTOBER	

RELEASE DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE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COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES CVG
PRO EVO DERBY SPECIAL

NORTH V SOUTH

Exhausted PES players watch the wonder goals happen

PES LEAGUE SPECIAL REPORT

24 APRIL 2004, ASTON EVENTS CENTRE

It was billed North Vs South, but on April 24, challengers came from the far corners of the earth to take part in the first PESLeague Derby!

Yes, we even had a visitor from China arriving in Aston, Birmingham. Wang Shang, 22, from Zhenzhou, joined fellow Pro Evo players from places as different as Harrogate in Yorkshire to Katwyk in Holland, all keen to find official PES recognition.

Everyone was using their Master League squads, with classic players like Pele

Late arrivals gather around at midday to be paired off for their first round of games

BRIGHT AND EARLY

Graeme 'Grazza' Boyd, and Paul 'PDiddy' Davies arrived at 10am to find preliminary rounds already underway. They literally bumped into Robert Ashworth, who had left London at five in the morning to be sure of getting in. By 1pm, everyone, including Robert, was discovering what it would take to reach the finals. Top players from inside PESLeague, such as Nic Padamsee from Southend, were visibly surprised to encounter such strong competition from guys who aren't yet registered. But like Andy Flanigan, a giant from nearby Redditch said, "If you can't take a beating every now and again, there's no point in playing."

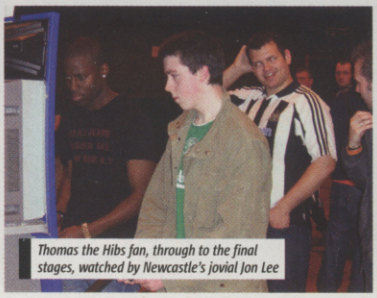
Sam and Josh Wainwright with their mate, Tom – Villa fans!

Jon Edwards puts four past the Villa keeper, but hasn't scored all season for his team!

TIME TO KILL

With so many games to be played, folks were on the prowl looking for other activities. Grazza was handing out £10 Virgin vouchers to anyone who could beat him, PESFan had 'Beat the Ref', and later a very popular doubles tournament for anyone who was officially out of the main competition. Also – if you had the energy, and wanted to kick a ball, not your mate – there was a penalty shootout against a Villa keeper. Jon Edwards was very impressive, scoring four out of five with conviction. ✷

Ricky Green takes charge of the doubles tournie, on the big screen in PESfan corner


Thomas the Hibs fan, through to the final stages, watched by Newcastle's jovial Jon Lee

THE FINAL

In order for Peter McCormack and Oz Idris to reach the final, they had to knock out two of PESLeague's best.

For Pete, 25, from Bedford, he had to struggle with nine men against Liverpool firebrand Shui Ip. It ended up a 4-3 thriller. As for Oz, 19, from London, his obstacle was none other than David Sefah – the reigning PESLeague champ! Theirs was a tense 0-0 draw, even after extra time, and the exhausted Sefah slunk onto the floor having lost to Oz on penalties.

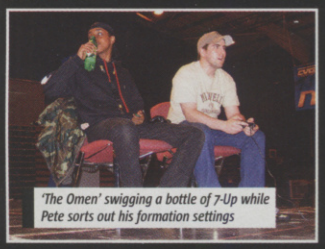
All eyes were now on stage for the final. This was to be all the more interesting because Peter is non-league whereas Oz is rightly proud of being unbeaten in his league in Chingford. Could the unshakable, optimistic Oz trust his fail-safe strategies to combat Peter's individual attacking prowess? In a word: yes. But it was close, especially in the first half.

An early first goal for Oz was only to be expected. Peter had gambled on an all-out assault and was left wide-open at the back. After a lengthy adjustment of formation, the game continued. On 34 minutes a sublime through ball gave Peter time to show off with a 'Zidane' turn before scoring from inside the box. It was glorious, but not for long.

On 39 minutes Oz responded with an infuriating little pass back to Henry who was positioned almost directly on the spot, and chose to hammer it home. The second half was all about Oz protecting his lead, passing the ball around in his own half, enticing Peter to foul him, and further waste time.

Oz and Pete with their game faces in full effect. We've never seen such dribbling

Very near the end, it looked as though Peter had a run at goal, but Oz's defence was all over him. 2-1 to Oz, and the first PESLeague Derby winner took the grand prize of a trip to Corsica and, of course, the Derby cup!


'The Omen' swigging a bottle of 7-Up while Pete sorts out his formation settings

Playing for time, Oz leads Pete on a wild goose chase for five minutes...

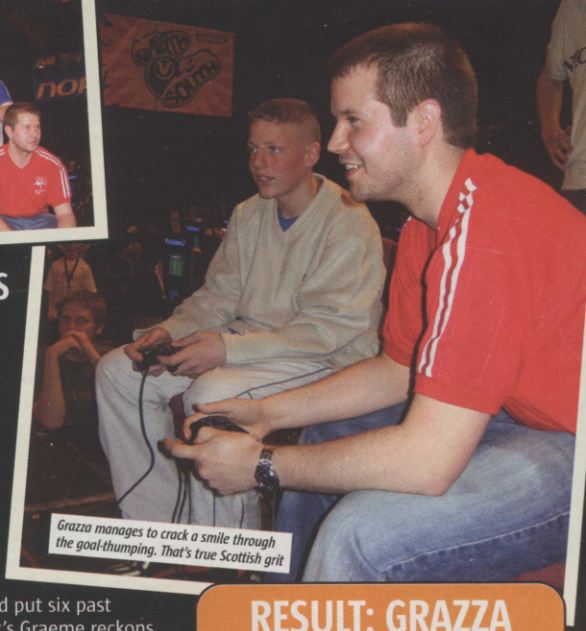
CHALLENGE CVG

CHALLENGE RULES

Five-minute games, international teams, no fannying about with tactics, just pure, liquid Pro Evo. If you beat Graeme you scoop a £10 Gift Voucher for Virgin Megastores! Result!

PRO EVO 3 DERBY DAY SPECIAL

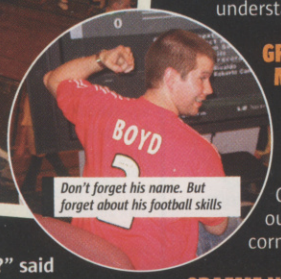
CVG TAKES ON THE COUNTRY'S BEST PRO EVO PLAYERS!



Grazza manages to crack a smile through the goal-thumping. That's true Scottish grit

GRAZZA VS PES ALL-COMERS

Grazza played for hours on a TV bigger than a house. Mad eyes!



Don't forget his name. But forget about his football skills

"Pro Evo 3 Derby Day?" said our Grazza, "the best players from the four corners of the country in a serious goalsack-stretching frenzy? I'll have some of that!"

The real action in the venue wasn't hammering the other players in your group or even deciding which one of the girls keeping score was the hottest. The real action was up on the stage, where our Grazza was handing out £10 Virgin vouchers to everyone who thumped him (and that's a lot of vouchers). Here's some of the highlights.

GRAEME VS PAUL FROM LIVERPOOL

The day's opening match looked to be dominated by Graeme but three awesome goals from Paul, including a 25-yarder from Henry, got things off to a stinker. "Not the best of starts," said Paul. An understatement. 0-3

GRAEME VS ROB FROM MANCHESTER

1-0 up at the half Graeme was getting cocky, but an early equaliser shut him up quick. Then Rob lined up a Roberto Carlos free kick from 35 yards out... and nailed it in the top corner! Bosh! 1-2

GRAEME VS TIM FROM TOTTENHAM

Tim and his boys rule the North London leagues, so when they turned up Graeme tried to ban them from entering. No way. Tim tricked his way to a flashy win with a cracking chip from Trezeguet to finish things off. 0-2

GRAEME VS BADÉ FROM TOTTENHAM

Another member of the North London crew, Grazza actually managed to keep things close until Badé sneaked it with "the luckiest goal I've seen since Holland put six past Scotland." That's what's Graeme reckons, anyway. 0-1

GRAEME VS FEMI FROM BECKTON

Close to desperation and without a goal in an hour, Graeme celebrated this scoreless draw like he'd won the Lottery. Sickening. Especially after Femi hit the post in the last minute. 0-0

GRAEME VS OSMAN FROM MANOR PARK

Os is our mate. He rules at Pro Evo. He went on to win the tournament, beating the UK Champ in a legendary semi-final, which made Graeme feel happier about getting properly walloped by him. 0-3

GRAEME VS AZHAN FROM MANCHESTER

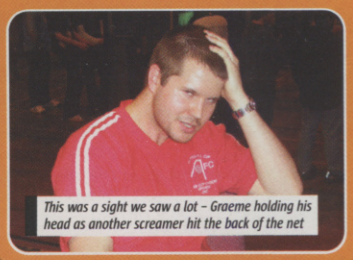
Down to his last voucher and having gone longer without scoring than Stephen Hawking, Graeme went out to hurt Azhan's Brazilians. "Calculated risk," said Grazza as he ruthlessly chopped down Ronaldo outside the box. Calculate my arse. Azhan fizzed the free kick into the net and capped off a miserable day for Graeme with a big curly dog turd. 0-2 ✷

RESULT: GRAZZA GETS RELEGATED!

Played 16, won 2, drew 4 and lost 10. That's Graeme's pathetic attempt to take on Britain's Pro Evo masters.

We should point out that these guys are ridiculously good at PES and "obviously play it all the time to the detriment of their personal hygiene and social life." Graeme also made us say that. Funny then that once the Virgin vouchers were gone it was Graeme who was left stinking of failure with no mates.

Honestly, this is getting embarrassing. "Do you actually PLAY games?" asked someone via text message to CVG. Well, yes, we do, although you probably wouldn't know it looking at Grazza. Why not try us out? Fill in the coupon and you could be testing our skills!



This was a sight we saw a lot – Graeme holding his head as another screamer hit the back of the net

Amardeep, 22, from Birmingham, beat Graeme 2-0 in a dull match

Azhan, 24, from Manchester, thumped Graeme 2-0 with a fizzing free kick from Carlos

Big Badé, 21, from Tottenham, scraped a lucky 1-0 win with a late-headed winner

Neil, 23, from Cardiff, made the most of a foul, slotting the penalty away and winning 1-0

David, 20, from Stoke, squeezed in a jammy goal to snatch a tight game

Femi, 21, from Beckton, made Graeme's day – by not actually beating him

Paul, 21, from Liverpool, was Graeme's first match, and stole it with three crackers

John, 22, from Birmingham, ground out a 0-0 draw. A good result for our boy

EVERY WINNER (AND THERE WERE PLENTY) NETTED A £10 VOUCHER FROM OUR MATES AT VIRGIN MEGASTORE!

Rob, 15, from Manchester, scored a Carlos free kick from 35 yards and won 2-1

Tim, 19, from Tottenham, defied the run of play to nick two cheeky goals

Neil, 25, from Swindon, went one down early on, but clawed back a 2-1 victory

Osman, 20, from Manor Park, scores goals more than he talks – and he talks a lot

CHALLENGE CVG: PLAY GAMES! BE GOOD! WIN PRIZES!

We're drawing a line in the sand. Things have been on the slide around here and it's got to stop. From now on we're not losing another Challenge.

If you've got mad gaming skills and think you can take on the might of the CVG juggernaut, you're wrong. But you should still fill in the form and send it to our new hi-tech games training facility (it's like that bit in the start of that 50 Cent In Da Club video, but with more joypads). You never know, you could be facing off with us and in with a chance of winning some amazing gear!

★HELLO, MY NAME IS: ..... [nickname] [age]

★BUT YOU MUST CALL ME ..... ★AND I'M ..... [game name]

★I AM THE BEST AT: .....

★MY ADDRESS IS: .....

★DAYTIME TELEPHONE NO: ..... ★EVENING TELEPHONE NO: .....

★EMAIL: .....

Send to: CVG Reader Challenge, CVG magazine, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1v 0BQ

EMAIL US AT: MAILBAG.CVG@DENNIS.CO.UK

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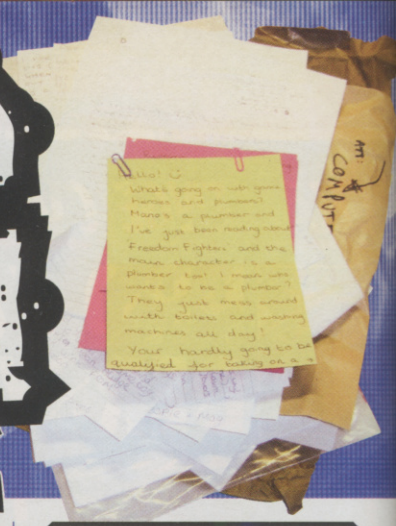


You could win £150 for speaking your mind! Send your thoughts to: Mailbag, CVG, Dennis Publishing, 9 Dallington Street, London, EC1V 9BQ

YES... EVEN MORE GIRL POWER

Sam Fisher: rugged good looks and hard as nails, but we could still 'ave 'im

I'm a girl gamer and my brother's always making fun of me. What's wrong with girls playing games? With so much gaming totty around I can't resist it. I just love Sam Fisher (especially when he does his split jump), Max Payne and Tidus from Final Fantasy X.

Yasmin Ahmad

What an offence I would be taking if I wasn't so laid back! Girl gamers? Yes they damn do exist and they're not gay or tomboys either! In fact I am totally 100 per cent straight and totally 100 per cent feminine but I own a GC and love Time Crisis, Resident Evil and car racing games!

E, via email

CVG Alright, enough with the Sam Fisher fetishes – men aren't pieces of meat you know. And I don't recall us once suggesting that girl gamers were gay, but you've got us thinking about it now. I wonder if Nurse CVG... sorry. So it's official, girl gamers do exist. Proof? Check this out...

GIRL GAMERS: HOT!

I know hot girl gamers exist – my girlfriend is one! She's called Tulip and she's into Xbox and GameCube – under my direct influence I'm proud to add! She likes to play all the cool racing, platform and adventure games I play. The only exception is first-person shooters, which make her wanna puke!

Thanks for a great mag and keep up the good work!

Arty, email

CVG Men, we knew you wouldn't let us down. We're drawing a line under this girl gamer stuff now. They clearly DO exist – check out Arty's pic on the right. If you reckon your gaming girlfriend is as smokin' as Tulip, prove it! Send us a picture so the whole world can be jealous!

Arty's girlfriend Tulip proves not all girl gamers are munting mowlers

STOP PLAYING WITH YOURSELF

It hit me the other day – why are computer gamers seen as geeks? I play mine a lot but this hasn't stopped me having a good social life. In a way a computer is a way for friends to socialise! How many people have their mates over for a Pro Evo match or Halo showdown? And as for girl gamers, my girlfriend was round the other day and we had a Pro Evo match. It was her first time playing but it was a cool way for us to have a laugh and hang out. So games consoles aren't there just for geeks. Think of them as socialising boxes!

We've made loads of friends playing Pro Evo – and lost some too, usually after a rough lunchtime session

Spider, via email

CVG True! While there's definitely some stinking, no-mates losers obsessed with gaming it's definitely something you can enjoy socially with your mates. While we're still not sure if a hardcore Pro Evo session is the best way to seduce your girlfriend, Challenge CVG and the Pro Evo League have shown playing games is a great way to meet people and make friends. We're not nerds! Woohoo!

NINTY NOT DEAD

There seems to be a lot of pessimism regarding Nintendo's situation. The main reason people buy its hardware is to play games like Mario and Zelda. I don't think Nintendo has the balls to compete directly with Sony and Microsoft – that's why it aims its products at a younger audience.

"I DON'T THINK NINTENDO HAS THE BALLS TO COMPETE DIRECTLY WITH SONY AND MICROSOFT"

This doesn't mean Nintendo will die; it means that it will never be market leader – and it's clear it's not interested in delving into home entertainment or online gaming. Still, as long as Nintendo keeps making great games for its own hardware, it will keep its loyal fans!

Vishal, via email

CVG Spot on, Vishal. The Cube's lack of DVD capabilities makes it strictly a games machine in contrast to Xbox and PS2's flexibility, the price point and cutesy games make it perfect for young kids, and killer titles like Zelda,

SHORT & CURLIES

CHOPPED UP, SHIPPED OUT

Nintendo has been making great games for ages and anyone who thinks their games are for kids is mad!

Halo 2 vs Killzone: Halo 2 will win hands down. I've finished every level in Halo on all the difficulties at least 100 times and I still love it!

Are MGS: TS and The Sims 2 coming out on PS2?

Twin Snakes: No way. Sims 2: probably, but it won't be the same as the PC version

Why wasn't Headhunter: Redemption in your last issue?

It's slipped, unofficially, until Christmas.

Girl gamers definitely do exist because Nurse CVG is a girl (at least I hope she is because if it's a man in drag I'll flip).

Nice work with Nurse CVG – she's damn hot! Could you send me some (cough) photos (cough).

David, via email

Our Jaime's got a disc on his desk called 'Raw Images of the CVG Nurse', but he won't let us look.

Not too sure why you need a nurse but love how you're showing your support for women gamers.

Spider

That is exactly why Nurse CVG is there. It's not her nice boobs or nothing.

CVG STINKER

DUDE, WHERE'S MY SENSE OF HUMOUR?

How low can your magazine go? Didn't CVG used to be a games magazine? I'm surprised you haven't decided to put in a Page 3 girl, oh hold on, that's what Nurse CVG is! Why bother with tips – you may as well just show her semi-naked. It's got nothing to do with games does it?

And as for Count Yourself Lucky, knocking games released 15 years ago and saying they look rubbish? Do you really think Vice City is going to look like the height of graphical excellence in 15 years' time? It really shows you up as the dumbed-down, clueless magazine that you have become.

An Ex-Subscriber

CVG Mate, we checked to see if there was a sense of humour spare but we figure it'd be wasted on you. So you don't like Nurse CVG? You might not have noticed but there's also loads of cheats and tips beside the photos. And, news just in, Count Yourself Lucky is a bit of fun. Fun? Remember that? It's that weird feeling you used to get playing games, but we guess you spend too much time with your head up your arse for that. Do us all a favour – keep it that way.

CVG STAR LETTER

HOW TO START A FIGHT ON A BUS

Four lads were sitting behind me on the bus the other day. Three of them, PS2 owners, were spouting off to their Xbox-owning chum. The Xbox kid was unable to put up much of a defence, so I thought I'd help out!

"Have you even played Halo or Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow?" I asked. I got no answer. "So why slag it off if you don't know what you're talking about? If you stick to one system you miss out on classic titles on other consoles!"

As I stepped off the bus I looked up expecting to see their grateful faces. They gave me the two-finger salute which I'm hoping means, 'Thank you for showing us the true meaning of games.'

Shane, via email

***CVG** Shane, we're going to award you the first ever CVG Award for Services to Gaming Peace and Love, for bravery in the face of a potential shoeing. The moral of the story is that it's pointless to try and change some people's attitudes. It'd be cool if everyone appreciated every great game on every system, but let's be honest: it feels ace arguing about your favourite console with your mate, and we don't want to stop!*

cex

WINNER

Star Letter-writers win £150 to spend at CeX. CeX is the place to trade in your old games, DVDs and consoles for new ones, or sell them for unbeatable cash pay-outs. With games starting from £3, the winner could get 50 games! Check out www.cex.co.uk for more info.

Mario and Metroid have the heritage and intense playability that fanboys love. Casual gamers might not get it, but Nintendo still has a place in the industry.

NEXT-GEN PARTY POOPED

That Xbox 2 car crash demo might be what the console is really capable of, but real games will have more than just one car in a tunnel. There will be loads of stuff happening, so the physics for each object will not be quite so intense.

Chris, via email

***CVG** Yeah, but you won't be studying the carnage quite so closely as you zoom past at 120mph! The tech demos aren't actual Xbox 2 games, but they do mean we can expect mind-blowing physics and visuals. Oh, and at E3 we saw TWO cars smacked to hell in a tunnel, so there!*

CRUNCH! Is this demo a glimpse of the future or an impossible dream?

Could the new Xbox memory unit be an iPod-style multimedia machine?

HARD DRIVE HARD-ON

So Xbox 2 might not have a hard drive? Well I've heard rumours about the possibility of a portable hard drive that would also have the ability to play MP3 and WMA files. Think about it – it'd be an iPod killer! You could have your saved games on there so you could take them over to your mate's house, and listen to some tunes or watch a movie on the way!

Jamie, via email

***CVG** This is an idea that we've been talking about. Imagine a portable memory unit that you could store music, movies and games on, then dock it with your Xbox 2 or PC! And since Microsoft is determined to rule your home entertainment this would fit nicely in with its plans. Remember where you read it first!*

NIFTY 50

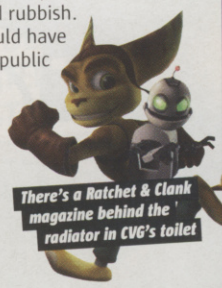
Congratulations on the new look – it's great. The Big 50 is a brilliant idea, but I think some of your choices are wrong. I noticed that all of the games in it apart from a few exceptions were fairly new. What about the classics that have shaped how games are today? I'm not saying that you should put games like Space Invaders or Pac-Man in, but games like Half-Life and Deus Ex are rarely matched today. Return our classics to their former glory!

Robin, via email

***CVG** Games like Half-Life and Deus Ex are classics, but we want to capture the 50 greatest games RIGHT NOW. Come on, you'd choose Halo over Half-Life or Pro Evo 3 over Sensible Soccer, no matter how much you loved the older game. We also want the Big 50 to provoke debate, so keep your opinions coming!*

GAME NAMES: BUNCH OF ARSE

People who think up game names should be shot in the head for coming up with stuff like Tak And The Power Of JuJu or Banjo-Kazooie: Grunty's Revenge or Ratchet & Clank: Up Your Arsenal. I'm not saying they're bad it's just the names make them sound rubbish. I reckon they should have polls and ask the public for ideas.



There's a Ratchet & Clank magazine behind the radiator in CVG's toilet

Red_Scorpion, Rochdale

***CVG** Dunno, like – we love shouting "JUUUUUUUU!" at each other, we like the way 'Grunty' sounds, and 'Ratchet and Clank' is cracking rhyming slang for having a, you know, private intimate moment. It's game names with colons that we hate, like Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow. D'ya know how many times we have to check the correct spelling and punctuation? And don't get us started on Star Wars subtitles...*

"PEOPLE WHO THINK UP GAME NAMES SHOULD BE SHOT IN THE HEAD"

MAILBOMBS!

Sprinkling across our desks like powdery particles of videogame anthrax...

- PSP vs DS: Who's gonna win the ultimate handheld face-off?
- E3 revelations: What are your red hot picks from the show?
- GTA San Andreas: What d'ya think of the new screens and info, cuz?
- Xbox 2: Will it really be that good?
- Nurse CVG: come on, would you?

EMAIL US AT: MAILBAG.CVG@DENNIS.CO.UK

YOUR SUGGESTIONS

IN CVG 272 WE ASKED YOU WHAT YOU WANTED TO SEE IN GTA: SAN ANDREAS. HERE'S YOUR STRAIGHT-GANGSTA IDEAS

- Co-op missions, multiplayer, and online mode where you create your own gangs and see your reputation grow.
- Road Rash-style gameplay would be proper bo' I tell thee!
- I would like a football so you could have a kickabout and play for money.
- I want to fly out from San Andreas and do missions abroad.
- If you bust people out of Alcatraz they should owe you a favour.
- You should be able to hold people hostage.
- There should be a cruise ship that you can go on.
- You should be able to ride bicycles and be able to smoke weed. When you smoke you go fast but lose health.
- I want to fly fighter jets.
- I want zombies on the streets and when you collect every package you get a car with guns and wings on the side.
- I want to pick up bodyguards and go places with them beating the crap out of people.
- I would like to hire hoodlums and control 'em all, Freedom Fighters-style.
- I want to be able to tell your gang of recruited thugs to take over other 'hoods.
- I want to see kids on the street.
- I want to be able to aim all weapons manually.
- I want to start business rackets such as garages with stolen car parts or illegal booze networks.
- I want to fly jumbo jets and drive tractors.
- I want to customise vehicles.
- I want EVERY building to be accessible.
- I want people to own and walk their pets.
- I want to be able to have bodyguards at all my properties, protecting them from my enemies.
- I want speed bumps.
- I want to be able to parachute – imagine evading cops by jumping off a cliff on a bike with a parachute!

Keep your GTA: San Andreas ideas coming – you might see them in CVG and who knows, you might even see them in the game!

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES CVG

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Lovin' everything about E3 this month were...

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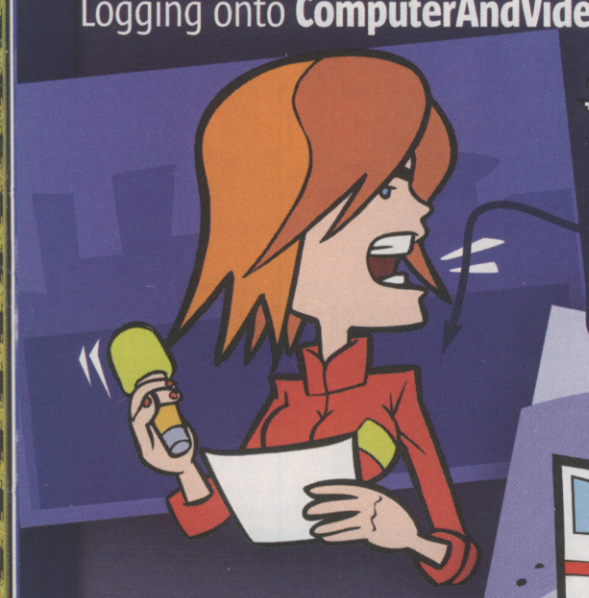
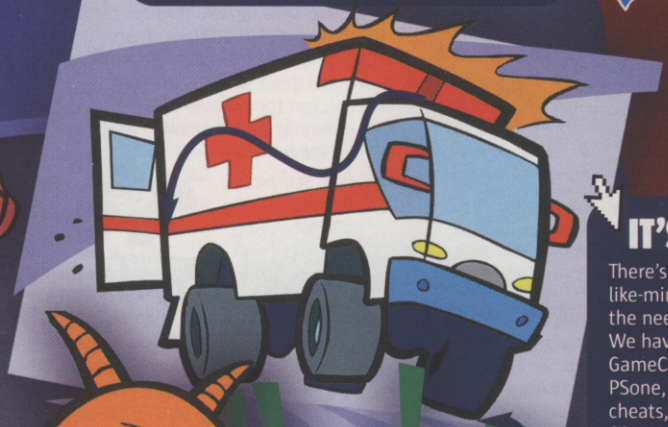
LOG ON AND LOAD UP ON INFO!

Still hungry for more even after thumbing through this game-packed issue of CVG? Logging onto **ComputerAndVideogames.com** will satisfy the biggest gaming appetites



HOTTEST GAMING NEWS

ComputerAndVideogames.com is Europe's leading online news service covering games on a global scale. Any self-respecting games fan simply cannot afford to miss the latest developments on PS2, Xbox, Game Boy Advance, GameCube and PC from around the world. There's only one place to keep up and that's here. CVG's news is an essential part of your daily routine.

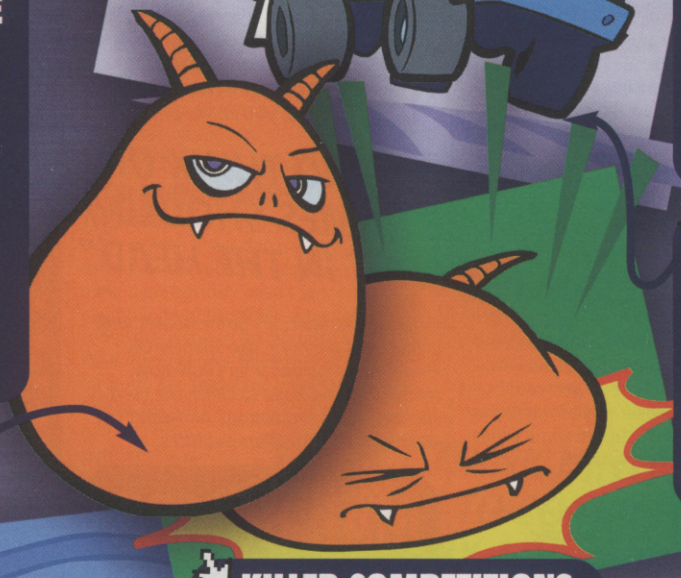


IT'S GOOD TO TALK

There's no better place on the Web to meet like-minded people than on our forums. Feel the need to spout on about your passion? We have bulletin boards for PS2, Xbox, GameCube, Game Boy Advance, PC, Mac, PSone, Dreamcast, N64, music and film, cheats, our online ranking service CSports.net and a general place to talk games. Join the party right now!

FIND THE GAME YOU WANT

Our site is fit to burst with an enormous amount of archived news, reviews, previews, features, cheats and downloads. Looking for some screenshots? We have thousands of them. And using our simple navigation, finding exactly what you want on any format couldn't be simpler: allow us to take the pain of searching out your gaming addiction!

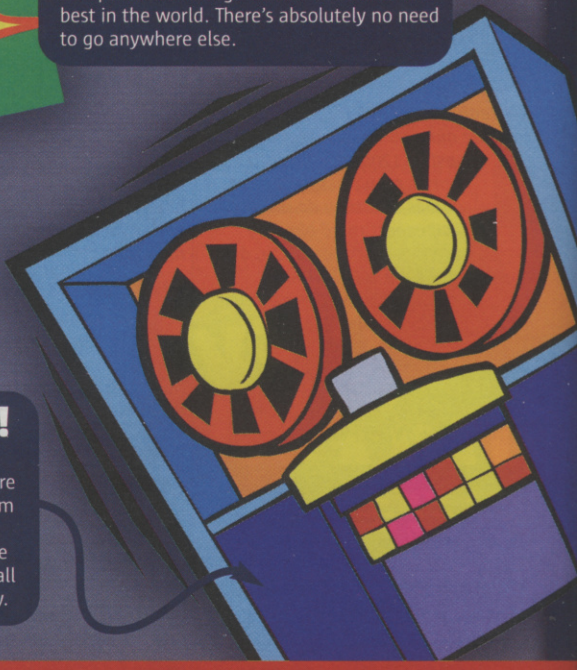


ESSENTIAL TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

CheatStation is one of the biggest sources of gaming tips, cheats and guides on the Internet, supplying 37,558 cheats for 8877 games on 40 formats. Features such as being able to vote on any cheat make ComputerAndVideogames.com's service the best in the world. There's absolutely no need to go anywhere else.

KILLER COMPETITIONS

Fact: the best online competition prizes around are to be found on ComputerAndVideogames.com. Consoles, games, TVs and everything else you could ever need to make your gaming life a luxury fly out of our hands faster than you can say, "I need free stuff". Don't be a mug: you've got to be in it to win it.



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REVIEWS

FULLY INDEPENDENT & MULTIFORMAT ✶ TRUST NO-ONE ELSE

P72 Red Dead Revolver
Rockstar sticks its sizzling brand onto the cowboy shooter, but is it a prize steer or a gristly lump of prairie offal? Yee-haw!

P76 Thief: Deadly Shadows
CVG goes robbin' hooding with Eidos's light-fingered medieval sneaker. Should you save your groats up to buy it?

P84 Drakengard
We've been excited about Square's dragon and dicin' RPG for a while now, but will it survive our review flame-roasting or fizzle out to ashes?

E3? PLAY THESE GAMES NOW!

Hello! I'm the reviews Don this month since Lee's left and everyone else has been fannying about at E3. Plus they nicked my preview section to cover all the biggest new games.

Anyway, who needs far off games when there's loads of stuff on the shelf RIGHT NOW? Like Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain's fast-paced espionage action, Rockstar's wild west 'em up Red Dead Revolver, super-sneaky Thief 3 and the long-awaited PAL release of Onimusha 3? All right, so we're all excited about E3's biggest announcements, but there's some great stuff on the shelves right now.

Graeme Boyd

Graeme Boyd *Reviews Editor*

CVG'S BIG REVIEW P68

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN

"MOMENTS OF DELIRIOUS PLEASURE PUNCTUATED BY PUKE-INDUCING FRUSTRATION"

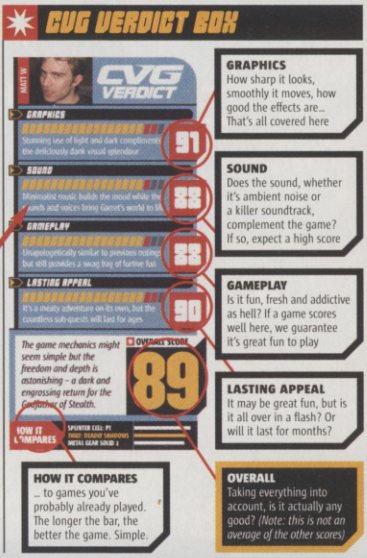
THIS MONTH

SYPHON FILTER: THE OMEGA STRAIN ..... 68 — PS2
RED DEAD REVOLVER ..... 72 — XBOX PS2
X-FILES: RESIST OR SERVE ..... 74 — PS2 XBOX
MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR ..... 75 — GC
THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS ..... 76 — XBOX PC
ONIMUSHA 3 ..... 78 — PS2
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR ..... 80 — XBOX
SMASH COURT TENNIS 2 ..... 82 — PS2
DEADLY SKIES III ..... 83 — PS2
DRAKENGARD ..... 84 — PS2
.HACK MUTATION ..... 86 — PS2
GRAN TURISMO: PROLOGUE SIGNATURE EDITION ..... 87 — PS2
PHANTASY STAR ONLINE III: C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION ..... 88 — GC
F-ZERO: GP LEGEND ..... 92 — GBA
SONIC ADVANCE 3 ..... 93 — GBA
MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3: THIS IS THE REMIX ..... 93 — PS2 XBOX
PERIMETER ..... 95 — PC
BOKTAI: THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND ..... 96 — GBA
SAMURAI WARRIORS ..... 98 — PS2 XBOX
HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN ..... 99 — PS2 XBOX GC PC
DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2: DIDDY KONG'S QUEST ..... 99 — GBA
VAN HELSING ..... 99 — GBA
DIGIMON RACING ..... 99 — GBA
IMPORT! GUILTY GEAR XX RELOAD ..... 100 — XBOX
IMPORT! DERBY STALLION 04 ..... 101 — PS2
IMPORT! KATAMARI DAMACY ..... 102 — PS2
IMPORT! WINNING ELEVEN 7: INTERNATIONAL ..... 103 — PS2

HOW CVG'S REVIEWS WORK

CVG's reviews are the most accurate, informative and downright honest you'll ever read. Here's why...

CVG VERDICT BOX



GRAPHICS How sharp it looks, smoothly it moves, how good the effects are... That's all covered here

SOUND Does the sound, whether it's ambient noise or a killer soundtrack, complement the game? If so, expect a high score

GAMEPLAY Is it fun, fresh and addictive as hell? If a game scores well here, we guarantee it's great fun to play

LASTING APPEAL It may be great fun, but is it all over in a flash? Or will it last for months?

OVERALL Taking everything into account, is it actually any good? *(Note: this is not an average of the other scores)*

HOW IT COMPARES ... to games you've probably already played. The longer the bar, the better the game. Simple.

CVG SCORES

By popular demand, CVG has switched to percentages to bring you the most precisely calculated scores ever!

95+ DIAMOND Award

90-94+ GOLD Award

85-89+ SILVER Award

75-84+ You'd be pleased to get this as a gift, though next month you'll probably forget you own it.

65-74+ Some fun to be had but one best bought by your mate so you can get a lend of it.

55-64+ A pretty average game that's unlikely to set the gaming world on fire on any level.

41-54+ You really shouldn't even consider renting one of these, let alone buying one.

UNDER 40 STINKER Award

THE CVG AWARDS SYSTEM

We score everything out of 100, to give you the most accurate reviews ever. And if a game is exceptional, we'll give it an Award, so you know what a diamond game it is...

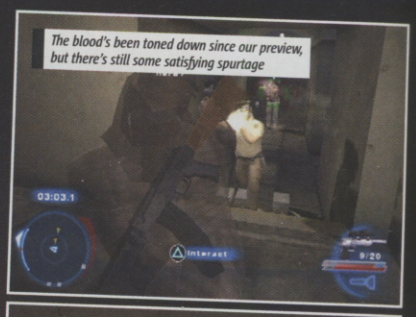
DIAMOND Award The most coveted award a game can get. It's worth buying the console just to play it!

GOLD Award A bloody amazing game you've got to own. It's brilliant in almost every respect, so go get it!

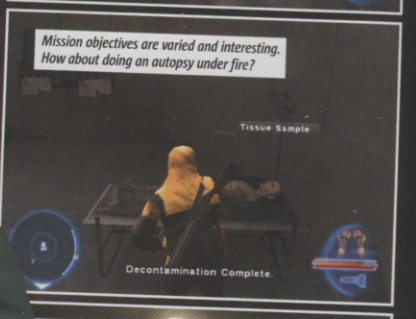
SILVER Award Highly recommended by CVG's experts. May not be anything ground-breaking but it's still ace.

STINKER Award More abominable than a reality TV show, set in a barbers, called "I'm a Yeti..."

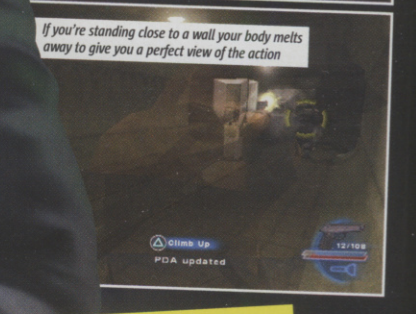
RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO	ONLINE GAMING	EXTRAS
25 JUNE	COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1	* PUB: SONY * DEV: SCEA FOSTER CITY STUDIO * WWW.PLAYSTATION.COM * CONTACT: 020 7859 5000	* 1-4 PLAYERS * CO-OP ON NINE LEVELS FROM A TOTAL OF 17	* INTERNET ADAPTOR * USB HEADSET



The blood's been toned down since our preview, but there's still some satisfying spurtage



Mission objectives are varied and interesting. How about doing an autopsy under fire?



If you're standing close to a wall your body melts away to give you a perfect view of the action

SYPHON FILTER THE OMEGA STRAIN

Infectious espionage action, but too aggressive for most immune systems

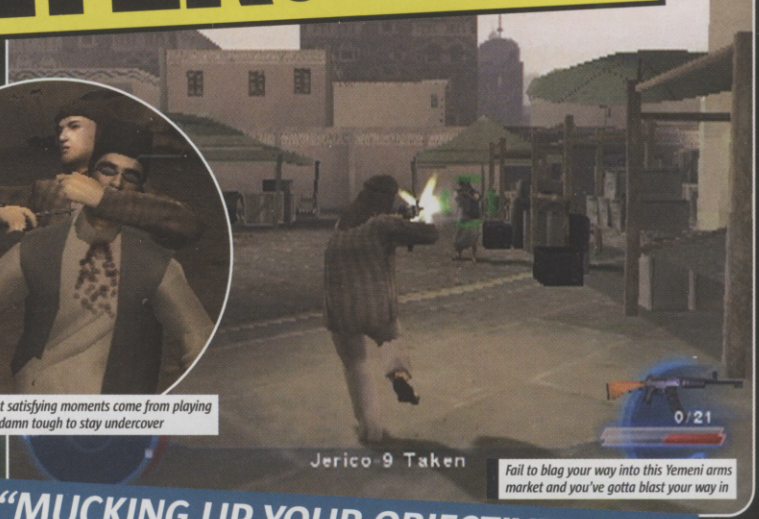
There's been a lot of illness going around the CVG office this month. All our joypads are crusted with snot, the games room is humming with the reek of vom, and someone left bright green skiddies on the bog bowl.

Why tell you about this plague of ill-health? Because Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain turned up just before all the germs kicked in, and the series has always been packed to the pus-bubbling gills with gruesome viruses. Bit suss, we reckon.

When we were exposed to The Omega Strain back in our world exclusive preview last November we told you how contagious it was. And right enough, since the review disc appeared we've been suffering long, feverish hours of blood, sweat and tears.

There are moments of delirious pleasure when the fever is lifted by a particularly sweet set-piece or a satisfying firefight, but these are also punctuated by hellish periods of puke-inducing frustration.

Some of the most satisfying moments come from playing stealthy, but it's damn tough to stay undercover



Fail to blag your way into this Yemeni arms market and you've gotta blast your way in

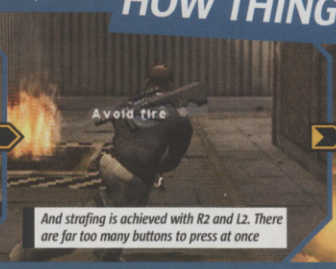
"MUCKING UP YOUR OBJECTIVES ISN'T GAME OVER, BUT IT CHANGES HOW THINGS PAN OUT"

CONTROL FREAK

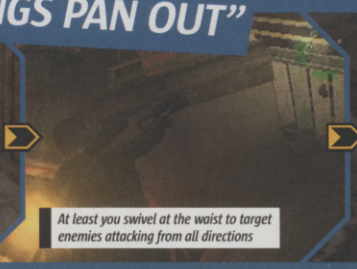
Or rather, freak controls. It takes ages to get used to moving around and even with practice it's never as responsive as Splinter Cell.

At least the camera always stays glued to your back, so you rarely end up getting smoked just because your view's mucked up.

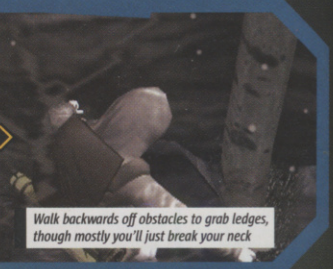
Movement with the left analog stick is quick but it's difficult to pull off tight moves



And strafing is achieved with R2 and L2. There are far too many buttons to press at once



At least you swivel at the waist to target enemies attacking from all directions

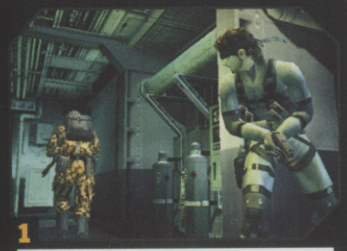


Walk backwards off obstacles to grab ledges, though mostly you'll just break your neck

SPY VERSUS SPY

Syphon Filter's main problem is it hasn't evolved much since PSone days, and while it's been standing still Sam Fisher and Solid Snake have been split-jumping, back-flipping and cart-wheeling all over the place.

The emphasis on replaying missions means the storyline isn't as involving as it's sneaky spy competitors, but online play is a nice touch.

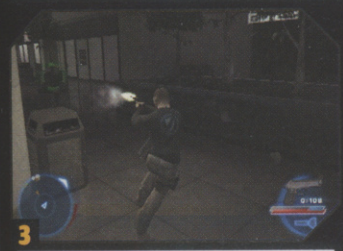


1

■ *MGS's intense story, fantastic design and polished controls set it above SF, and Snake Eater will, er, eat it*

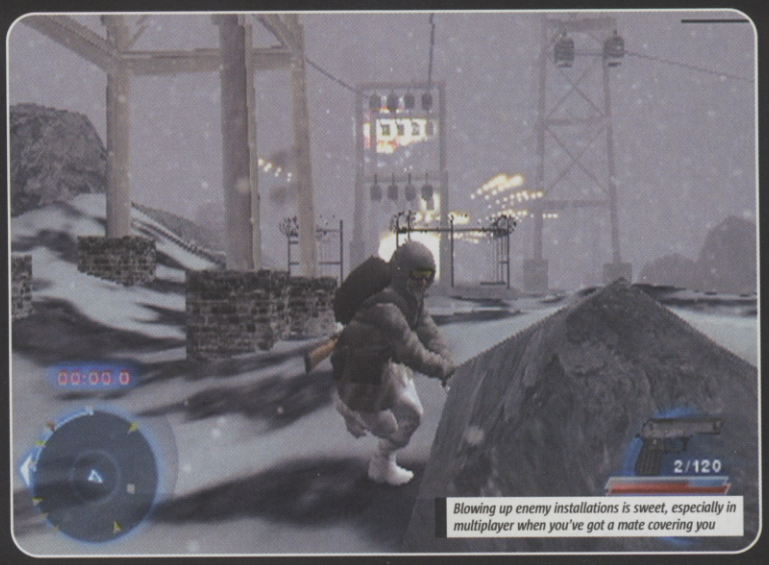
2

■ *Splinter Cell 2 is beautiful and satisfying, with wickedly reactive controls. PS2's version is due soon*

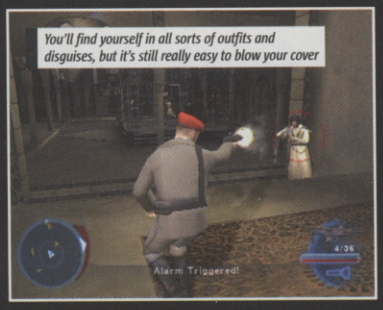


3

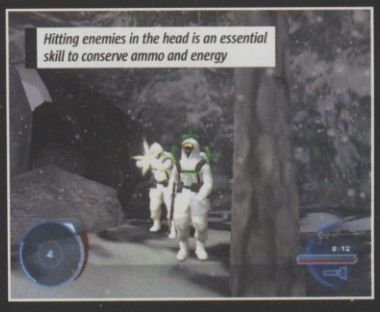
■ *SF: The Omega Strain has some cool moments, but suffers from dodgy controls and frustrating difficulty*



Blowing up enemy installations is sweet, especially in multiplayer when you've got a mate covering you



You'll find yourself in all sorts of outfits and disguises, but it's still really easy to blow your cover



Hitting enemies in the head is an essential skill to conserve ammo and energy

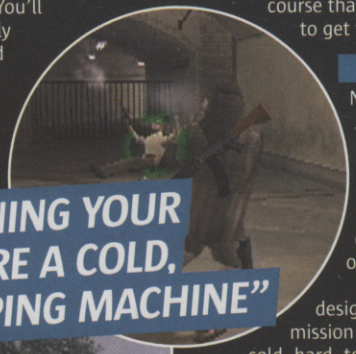
MISSION: WHATEVER

Things are pretty familiar if you've played the earlier SF games. You control a member of the anti-terrorist IPCA group (no, not Gabe Logan – he's the boss now, so you get to create a new agent) and try and prevent a killer virus being unleashed on the world. In simple terms it's a third-person espionage 'em up like MGS or Splinter Cell. You get dumped into an area with a few objectives and only your weapons and your smarts to rely on.

It's a set-up that favours freedom of choice over strict linearity, since you can choose the order you complete your objectives in like Hitman. Mucking some up isn't game over, but changes how things pan out. You can even die as many times as you want but it negatively affects your end-of-mission rating.

This is also where SFOS sets itself apart from any other game of its type: it gives you strict targets for each mission, including a time limit. You'll need to hit it to properly complete a mission and unlock all the awards. It's a bit like playing MGS on fast forward. There's no time to shimmy along walls or hide in shadows – you gotta get in, shoot bad guy face and get out sharpish. It's tough but when you do manage to achieve your objectives in the time limit you feel like a full-on badass super spy.

But it's not a feeling you get often. Time limits are tighter than a fish's poop chute: on one mission the target was 16 minutes and we took 1.5 HOURS. It's impossible to nail them without long, frustrating hours of trial and error – keep going back, refining your actions, memorising levels and slicing down your time. Similar to golf, each level is like a course that you need to practise to get the best scores.



OUT OF TIME

Not that you have to perfect them to actually progress. Even if you take hours completing only the barest mission objectives you can take on the next level.

But Syphon Filter is designed around honing mission ratings until you're a cold, hard, terrorist-topping machine. The game is relatively short and the attraction of the multiplayer mode is that it lets you play the single-player missions with up to three allies and complete them more efficiently.

Which, by the way, is pretty cool, even taking into account the strange absence of deathmatch. Taking on objectives with mates and discussing tactics via USB headsets really freshens the game, and since nine levels have been designed specifically for multiplayer as well as single-player play there are secrets you can only access with pals.

The addition of skill-specific awards and abilities also means you can concentrate on, for example, on being the sharpest-eyed sniper in the world. Then you can take out enemies from a rooftop while your mates plough through enemy defences to bomb an installation. Sweet, multiplayer satisfaction all round. »

"SFOS IS DESIGNED AROUND HONING YOUR MISSION RATINGS UNTIL YOU'RE A COLD, HARD, TERRORIST-TOPPING MACHINE"

Developing your combat skills unlocks special abilities like targeting individual body parts

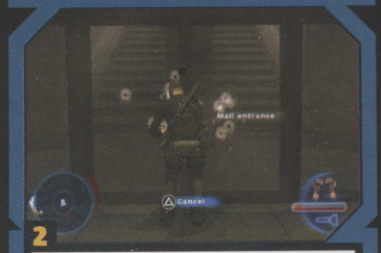
MISSION PERSON

Omega Strain chucks so many mission objectives at you that learning the levels can be a long and harsh experience.

In order to unlock everything you'll have to complete them all as quick as possible, but that's about as easy as nailing a bar of soap to a cheetah in an ice rink.

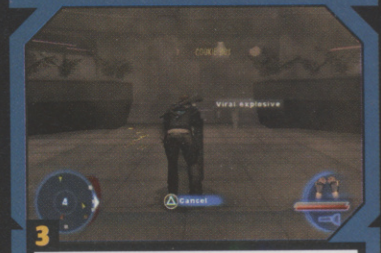
1

■ *On this mission you have to save injured SWAT troops, but pick up one and his mate usually cops it*



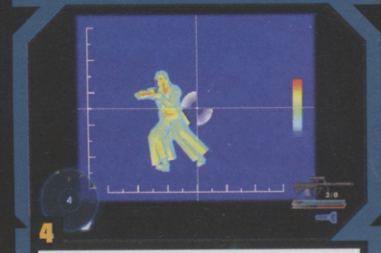
2

■ *Then you've got to make like a janitor and lock the entrances while terrorists use you for target practice*



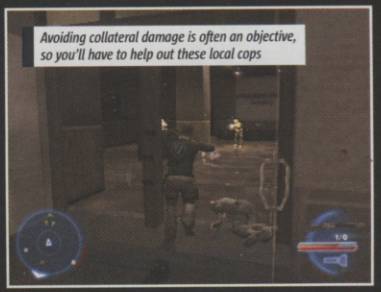
3

■ *There are bombs to be disarmed, too, which is especially tough when under fire from snipers*



4

■ *And to top it off you've got to kill the terrorist leader. IPCA agents must get paid much cheddar*

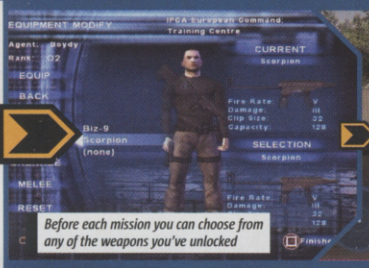


Avoiding collateral damage is often an objective, so you'll have to help out these local cops

■ Weapons are the ace up SF's sleeve, with tons of shooters, knifes, grenades and gadgets to keep trigger-happy spies smiling.

LOCK AND LOAD

Better still, honing your skills with certain weapon types unlocks special abilities and patches you can wear on your uniform!



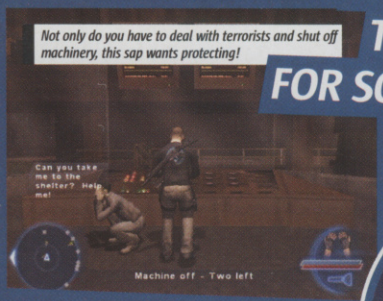
Before each mission you can choose from any of the weapons you've unlocked

We love the crazy stuff like this taser. Zap 'em long enough and they catch fire!

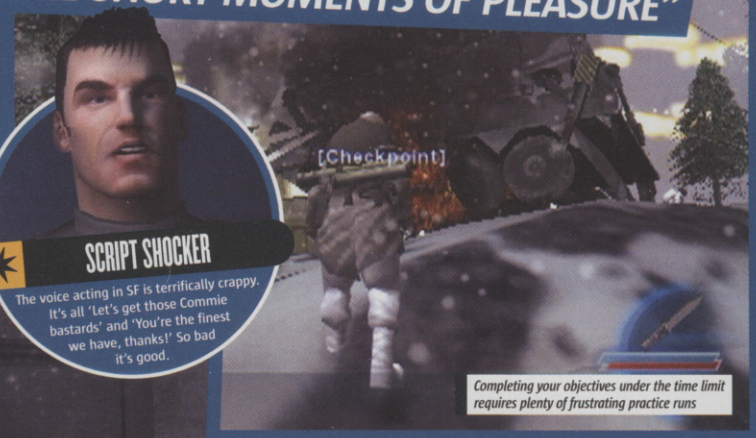
Certain weapons have special features, like this heat-sensing sniper rifle

Others, like this shoulder-mounted bazooka, just blow the crap out of everything!

"IT'S A HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS INFECTION THAT PUTS YOU THROUGH HELL FOR SOME SHORT MOMENTS OF PLEASURE"



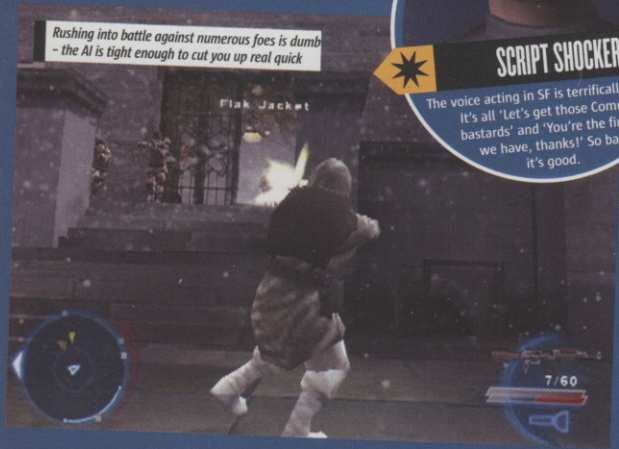
Not only do you have to deal with terrorists and shut off machinery, this sap wants protecting!



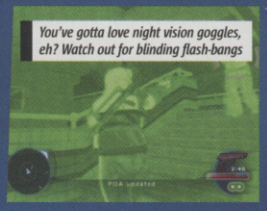
Completing your objectives under the time limit requires plenty of frustrating practice runs

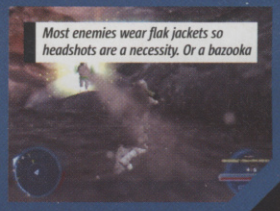
SCRIPT SHOCKER

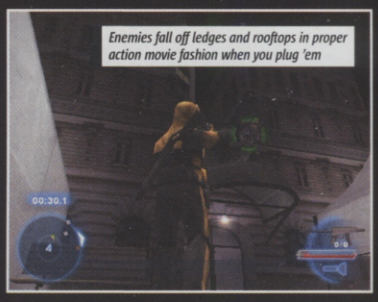
The voice acting in SF is terrifically crappy. It's all 'Let's get those Commie bastards' and 'You're the finest we have, thanks!' So bad it's good.

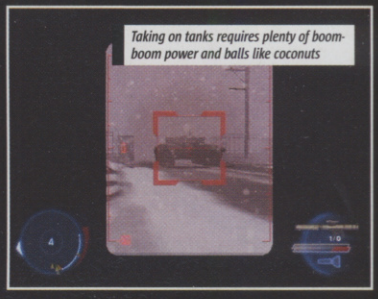


Rushing into battle against numerous foes is dumb – the AI is tight enough to cut you up real quick


You've gotta love night vision goggles, eh? Watch out for blinding flash-bangs


Most enemies wear flak jackets so headshots are a necessity. Or a bazooka


Enemies fall off ledges and rooftops in proper action movie fashion when you plug 'em


Taking on tanks requires plenty of boom-boom power and balls like coconuts

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Syphon Filter, Syphon Filter 2, Syphon Filter 3, Rise To Honour

HARD FACTS

■ Nine main levels
■ Eight Bonus levels
■ Nine Online levels
■ 100+ weapons
■ 79 Unlockable awards

DID YOU KNOW?

■ The Ebola virus mentioned in SF is a nasty little bugger that liquifies your insides and makes them drop out of your arse. And your mouth, ears, eyes, belly button, etc...

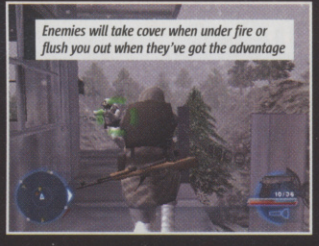
RE-SPAWNY BASTARDS

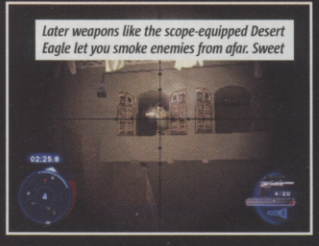
There are several things that make the experience frustrating both in single and multiplayer. Controls are imprecise and awkward. The map is an unhelpful mess. Objectives are often confusing or needlessly time-consuming, like having to trek back and forth because you can only carry one lump of C4 at a time. Plus enemies respawn with teeth-grinding regularity, draining your ammo and getting in your way.

And let's face it, playing the same level over and over again gets old pretty quick. Imagine watching a James Bond flick and having to sit through him dying fifty times before he works out how to kill the villain and save the chick. Dull. You quickly begin to long for MGS 2's mental but involving storyline and Splinter Cell's perfect pacing.

And yet there are lots of moments in SFOS that make you feel like a proper super special agent, like sneaking up to a heavily-guarded power station and blowing it sky-high, or busting into a room where an informant is about to be executed and saving his arse at the eleventh hour, or taking out a terrorist leader with a body-heat sensing sniper rifle. Sure it's hard – damn frustratingly hard – but when it pays off you feel awesome.

That pretty much sums up the Syphon Filter experience. Like the virus you're fighting to destroy, it's a highly contagious infection that puts you through hell. In return, you get some short moments of pleasure. If you've got a hardcore third-person immune system then go ahead and expose yourself, but if you've got the sniffles and squits like some of Team CVG then the Strain will be too much, so you'd better avoid it like the plague. ✱


Enemies will take cover when under fire or flush you out when they've got the advantage

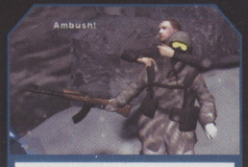

Later weapons like the scope-equipped Desert Eagle let you smoke enemies from afar. Sweet

STEALTH SERVICE

You don't have to be stealthy to succeed in Syphon Filter, but it definitely helps. Rushing into enemy territory will get your ribcage cracked real quick.

If you want to beat all the mission objectives you'll have to think smart. In our favourite mission you're behind enemy lines with only a pistol and a knife, and you've got to infiltrate a heavily guarded mansion. Here's how to get off to a stealthy start...

■ You're going to need a disguise and some weapons: sneak up behind a snoozing guard



■ Then press Square to slit his lazy throat before he raises the alarm. You're damn right it's an ambush!

■ Now you can hook yourself up with some thermal Russian army duds and ditch the corpse. Sneaky!

ALEX

CVG 2ND OPINION

Aren't games supposed to be fun? The time limits are so strict that every mission feels like a battle with a deadline rather than the bad guys, every second wasted raising your blood pressure. It's a hell of a feeling when you make it, but besides the interesting online mode Syphon Filter can't hope to compete with MGS and Splinter Cell's sublime stealthing.

GRAEME

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS — 74
Some slow-down, a wee bit of pop-up, but generally clear and unoffensive

SOUND — 87
Brilliant Hollywood-style music and sweet gunshot sounds, but rotten voice acting

GAMEPLAY — 71
Occasional inspired moments, but mostly sub Splinter Cell/MGS espionaging

LASTING APPEAL — 76
Built for replay, but doing the same missions over and over gets dull quickly

OVERALL SCORE ✱ **72**

Adequate spy 'em up with an unusual style that you'll either love or hate. Online play just about saves it, but Omega Strain should've been much more virulent.

HOW IT COMPARES
METAL GEAR SOLID 2
SP: THE OMEGA STRAIN
SPLINTER CELL

RED·DEAD REVOLVER

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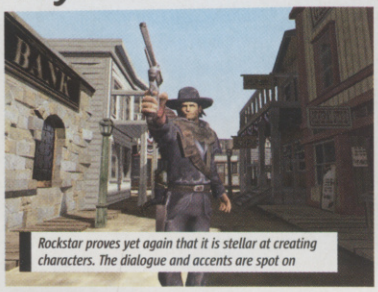
RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

GAME INFO COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: ROCKSTAR * DEV: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO
- HTTP://WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/REDDEADREVOLVER
- CONTACT: 01753 496600

RED DEAD REVOLVER

Rockstar finally sears the Wild West onto the hairy buttocks of the gaming world



Rockstar proves yet again that it is stellar at creating characters. The dialogue and accents are spot on

When you blast a bandit off a balcony they tumble over and drop to the street below, movie-style

Claret gushes everywhere whenever you manage to slam a slug into foes' faces

Know why cowboys do that silly bow-legged walk? It ain't because they've got bum grapes from riding bareback across hundreds of miles of prairie land. Nope, them's got huge cowboy balls, and Red Dead's are swinging somewhere around its knees.

This is a red-blooded stud of a game that snorts attitude and sweats atmosphere by the bucket-load. Plus it's a damned handsome sonnuvabitch, guaranteed to charm the snakes out of your boots with its amazing dusty visuals and gorgeously gritty effects.

WHO ORDERED DUCK?

For the most part you play as Red, an hombre who witnesses his family being butchered by bandits at the start. He's understandably miffed and the trouble that follows in his search for the killers is bloody, merciless and feverishly intense.

Rockstar has taken the arcade route with Read Dead, seeing you blast your way through hundreds of dirty bandidos and crazy-ass bosses. But it's not a dumb shooter. You must play clever and shoot sharp to survive – stand out in the open and you'll get gunned down from all angles faster than you can say sarsaparilla.

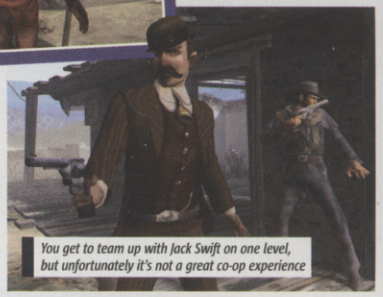
See, all the levels are rammed with stuff like knackered wagons and boulders that you can duck behind for cover. Hell, you can even kick over tables mid-fight and use 'em for cover. With a simple button press our guy sticks himself to the object that's protecting him from a face full of buckshot.

Once in place you can peer out, target enemies then pounce out and shoot, before ducking back to safety. Point is, unlike many other games that use similar techniques, in Red Dead most of your Wild West weaponry only holds a handful of bullets, and the reload time isn't quick. Not like the endless ammo clips we're all too used to. This spreads the tension on thick and adds extra thrills to the gunfights as you must constantly keep close tabs on your ammo situation, sprinting from cover to cover whenever possible. But Red Dead's more than just a peek-a-boo shooter...

HEY, GRINGO

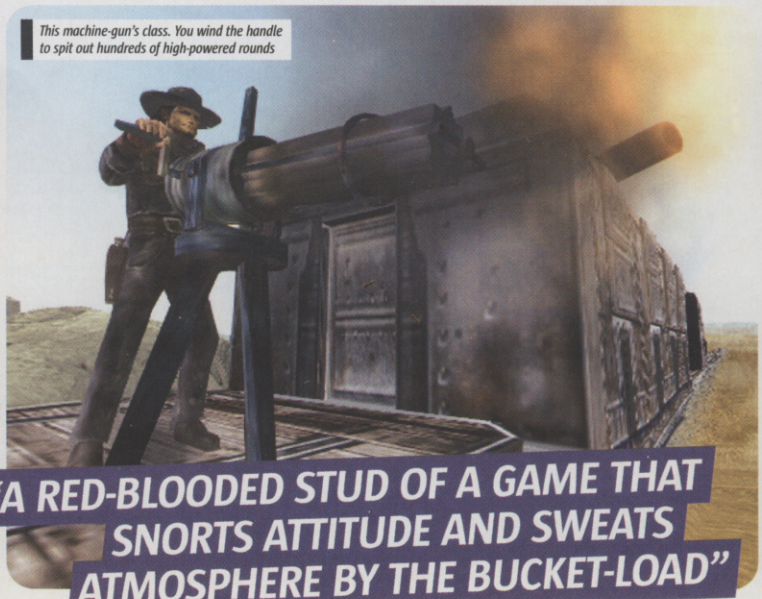
You've heaps of other bad boy skills. Enemies don't merely stay put – they hunt you down, and sometimes you need to stand and fight, which is where the close combat moves come into their element.

This is a quality mission. You've got to fight buffalo-riding bandits while trying to save your bulls

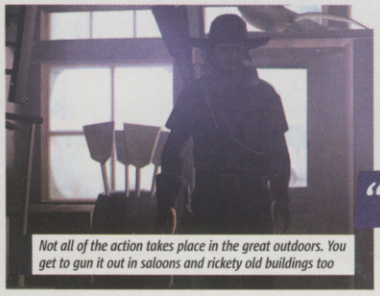


You get to team up with Jack Swift on one level, but unfortunately it's not a great co-op experience

As well as all his attack moves, Red is able to jump and clamber up ledges and onto rooftops



This machine-gun's class. You wind the handle to spit out hundreds of high-powered rounds



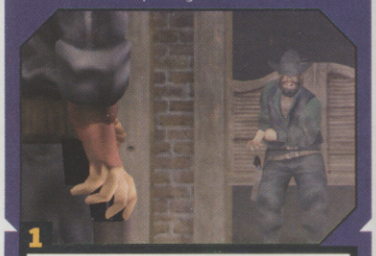
Not all of the action takes place in the great outdoors. You get to gun it out in saloons and rickety old buildings too

"A RED-BLOODED STUD OF A GAME THAT SNORTS ATTITUDE AND SWEATS ATMOSPHERE BY THE BUCKET-LOAD"

WHERE D'YA WANNIT?

Red's a goddamn pistol perfectionist and that's why he's such an awesome character to use.

Whether you're using slow-mo Dead Eye mode or gunning in real-time, it feels amazing to blast an enemy's shooting hand just as they're about to pop you, then slamming them in the eye with perfectly placed slug that sends their blooded Stetson spinning off into the dust.



1 ■ Whip out your six-shooter, rapidly target multiple critical areas, then gun the varmint down with style

2 ■ The big thrills come when you start to nail multiple headshots in Dead Eye mode using only six bullets

3 ■ If you only manage to target an enemy's limbs they'll flail around off balance, but not actually die

4 ■ Naturally enough, the further away you are from a foe the tougher it gets to nail the vital organs

THE MONEY SHOT

It's cool that Red can hide behind corners and aim at his enemies from safety, just like Sam Fisher does in Splinter Cell. But unlike Sam, Red has to leap out into the open to actually make the shot, which means timing your attacks to perfection.

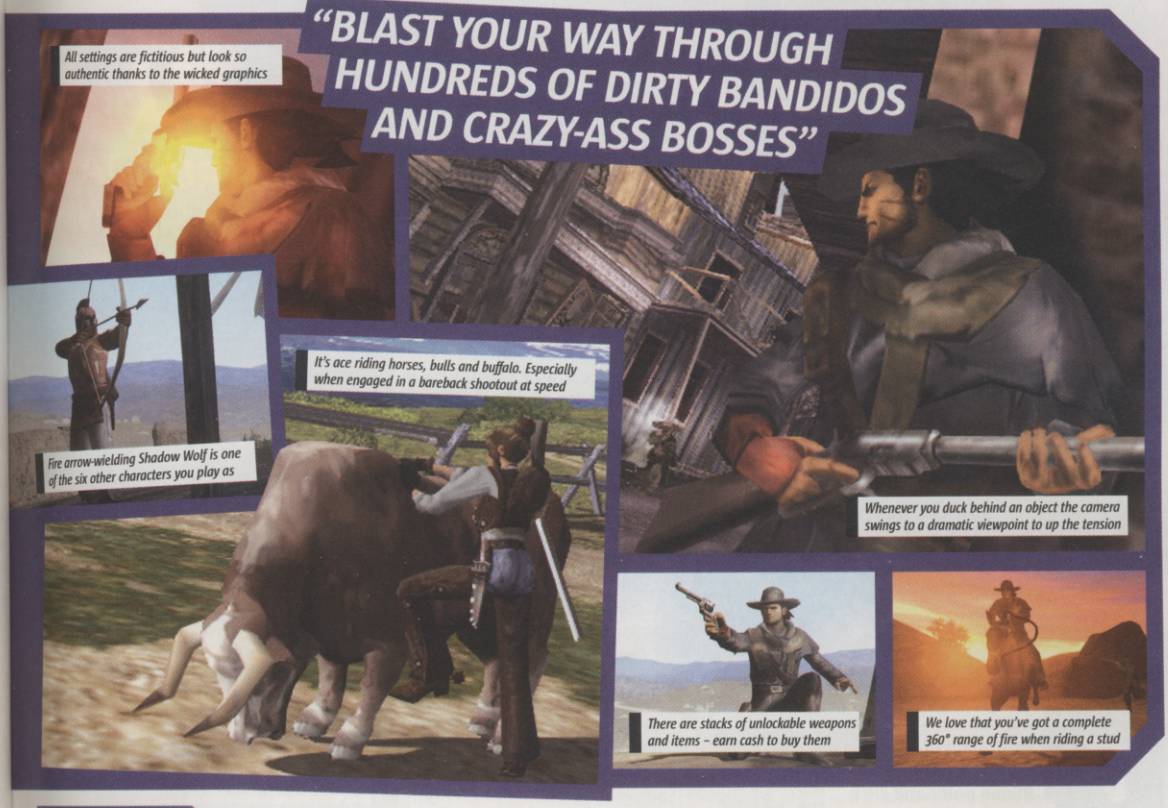
You have to act quick or else the enemy will run around to a better vantage point

Although the outlaws aren't that smart, some will use the same peek-a-boo tactics as you

Click down the right stick when using a rifle to zoom in and shoot more accurately

When Red runs along ducking for cover he grips his cowboy hat in true Wild West style

"BLAST YOUR WAY THROUGH HUNDREDS OF DIRTY BANDIDOS AND CRAZY-ASS BOSSES"



All settings are fictitious but look so authentic thanks to the wicked graphics

Fire arrow-wielding Shadow Wolf is one of the six other characters you play as

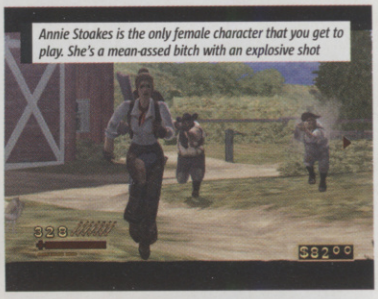
It's ace riding horses, bulls and buffalo. Especially when engaged in a bareback shootout at speed

Whenever you duck behind an object the camera swings to a dramatic viewpoint to up the tension

There are stacks of unlockable weapons and items – earn cash to buy them

We love that you've got a complete 360° range of fire when riding a stud

It's a nice surprise to see bots featuring in the multiplayer modes. You can mix it up however you want



Annie Stoakes is the only female character that you get to play. She's a mean-assed bitch with an explosive shot

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Midnight Club II, Spy Hunter 2

HARD FACTS

- Over 30 authentic Wild West weapons
- Six playable Story mode characters and 47 unlockable multiplayer gunslingers
- Widescreen option

DID YOU KNOW?

- Fast Draw is now a worldwide sport, but competitors shoot little balloons not each other. Competition draw speeds average 20/100th – the average human blink speed is 32/100th of a second!

One scenario sees you protecting a trio of hookers from some nasty gringos in a mad bar fight. You can punch, kick, grab, slap and bottle folk. Tables and chairs splinter and smash in the chaos. Sure, it's not the most sophisticated fight engine, but it adds an extra entertaining twist to proceedings.

Enemies lurk inside a burning barn. Not the cleverest spot for an ambush

DEAD EYE JOE

However, it's the Dead Eye and Quick Draw action that gives Red Dead its killer edge. Dead Eye works wickedly – rack up kills to charge your special gauge at the bottom of the screen, then go slo-mo and target loads of individual body parts on one or more enemies.

There are loads of scenarios when this skill is called upon, like in one early level where a boss slings the Sheriff over his shoulder. You gotta gun the nutter down as he sprints around – without harming the lawman.

As for the Quick Draw, it's inspired! On your travels you're forced to take part in tons of High Noon-style showdowns. The camera pans down behind your holster, with your enemy primed for action dead ahead. You're sweating bullets. Time slows. You flick back on the right analog stick to grip your gun and whip it out by flicking the stick forwards. Then it's a case of pinpointing vital organs on your enemy's body before letting the lead fly. You've got to be super fast and deadly accurate to win. It's a proper rush, especially further into the game when you take on THREE gunmen at once!

But, while there's no denying Red Dead is a smart and snappy arcade thriller, we would have loved some longer levels. See, once you figure out how to clock a stage it's over in a few minutes. And there isn't much going for it in terms of replay factor, as you can't revisit stages once you've completed them – unless you replay them immediately or go though the whole game again.

Nonetheless, Red Dead's venomous cocktail of sassy action, swish visuals and sharp scenarios make it a fresh and ballsy alternative to most other third-person console blasters currently roaming the paddock. ✷

GRAEME'S CVG 2ND OPINION

It sure is hella nice to finally see a game that exploits the potential of the Western in such a stylish way. Forget John Wayne – this is bloodthirsty, bullet-pocked Young Guns stuff. It's not the greatest or longest third-person shooter in the world, but it's a brilliantly fresh experience while it lasts and the sweet multiplayer modes help keep you gunnin' for more.

MIKE'S CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS — 93

Soaked in style, with real purty levels that are riddled with detail and blinding effects

SOUND — 80

Catchy Wild West tunes plinkedy-plonk in the background. Weapon sounds are solid

GAMEPLAY — 84

Fresh, fast and instinctive action. There are stacks of inventive and original scenarios

LASTING APPEAL — 72

Levels are extremely short, but you'll play it more than once. Decent multiplayer too

OVERALL SCORE 85

Strays from the usual third-person arcade formulas. It's rammed with well-executed original ideas, breakneck gunplay action and blessed with insanely good looks.

HOW IT COMPARES

- DEAD MAN'S HAND
- RED DEAD REVOLVER
- MAX PAYNE 2

SIX-SHOOTERS

Structure is pretty linear but Red Dead mixes things up a bit by letting you play several levels as one of six different characters with unique special abilities.

You can't choose who you play as, 'cos the levels are designed for each character's skills – General Diego's is firing a flare gun at distant targets so his cannons know where to fire. We like, but it's a shame you can't choose who you play the whole game as.

■ JACK SWIFT: A true English gent. He can pepper his enemies with masses of bullets in a single burst

■ ANNIE STOAKES: She's a cattle rancher who's a got a way with horses, bulls, and big guns

■ BUFFALO SOLDIER: He's a top soldier with a deadly aim and can pick off distant enemies with ease

RELEASE DATE 21 MAY

GAME INFO COST: £19.99 PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
- DEV: BLACK OPS ENTERTAINMENT
- WWW.THEX-FILES.VUGAMES.COM
- CONTACT: 01462 476130

X-FILES
RESIST OR SERVE

The truth is out there... Honestly, it's the score at the bottom of the page

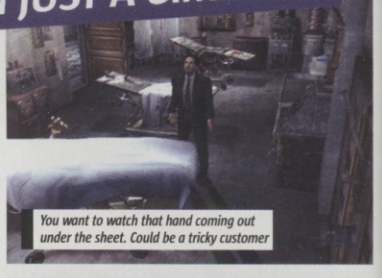
Flaming zombies! Hold on, where have we seen that before?

"AS EACH CHARACTER GETS DIFFERENT TASKS, PLAYING THE GAME THROUGH A SECOND TIME IS MORE THAN JUST A GIMMICK"

Zombie dogs! Wait, we feel like we've seen this all before...

Even the spooky use of torchlight is taken from the Silent Hill games

I knew I shouldn't have worn that edible eye-shadow



You want to watch that hand coming out under the sheet. Could be a tricky customer

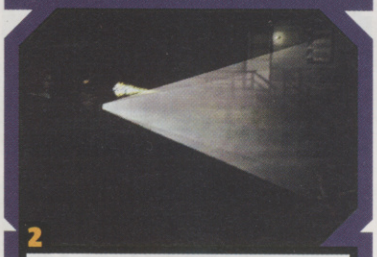
You get to do autopsies too. Yes, this one is probably dead

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

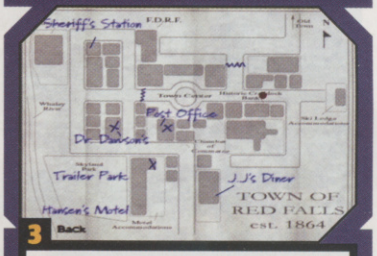
A few years ago Resist Or Serve would have seemed fresh. But we've all got a little bored of this kind of survival horror since then.

All the traditional weaknesses are there, and sadly the makers have done stuff all to make those bugbears bugger off.

1 ■ Not wanting to miss anything, you end up optimistically pressing X in case something happens



2 ■ Half the time you can't even see what the hell you're shooting at. But would you want to see...?



3 ■ Recognise this kind of map? The camera angles can make it hard to work out which way to go

4 ■ When the camera angles change, the controls can reverse, sending you running in circles

First up, wash your mind of the diabolical 1999 PSone point-and-click X-Files horror story. That crock of junk was made by a different company and its amateurish, rip-off stink shouldn't put you off sniffing round this new game – especially if you're a fan of the show.

Cutting to the bottom of the mystery, Resist Or Serve is a survival horror barely distinguishable in gameplay from Resident Evil or Silent Hill. Taking place before the seventh series of the show begins, the plot is classic X-Files stuff involving Black Oil and an alien conspiracy.

MYSTERIOUS GIRL

First up, you have to choose which of the bug-busting pair you want to play as. Both the characters are true to what they are in the show, with Mulder's adventure a little more based around his liking to sort things out directly (with a gun) and Scully's more scientific, sceptical approach (boring and brainy). As each character gets different puzzles and tasks, playing the game through a second time is more than just a gimmick.

The game is a treasure chest for X-Files diehards. You'll visit locations from the shows, encounter recognisable characters and villains and, if you're that way inclined, you could spend ages looking for little references to episodes hidden in the environments. Having the voices from Duchovny and Anderson really helps to get the right atmosphere, as does that 'whooooa – spooky!' music.

HEADACHE

It's just a shame the gameplay doesn't really bear up. Yes, it's perfectly competent, but it has all those survival horror control and camera headaches we got sick of ages ago. Have a look at the 'Problems, Problems' boxout to see what we mean.

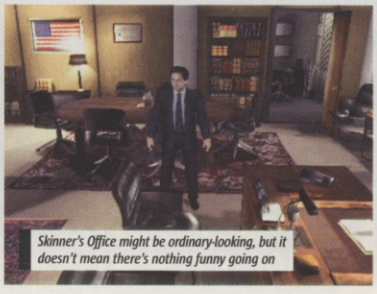
It's clear that most of the effort and resources have been ploughed into getting the feel of the show right in Resist Or Serve. But the visuals are a little drab and the likenesses of Mulder and Scully are a bit dodgy up close. That said, if you just can't get enough of the Files feel you'll probably be able to look past the 1990s gameplay and lap up that 1990s TV show atmosphere. ✷

PREVIOUS GAMES
■ Tomorrow Never Dies, KnockOut Kings 2002, The World Is Not Enough

HARD FACTS
■ There were an incredible 202 episodes of the TV show made and they STILL never had a shag.

DID YOU KNOW?
■ Animal facts: the dog in the episode entitled 'Ice' is the dad of David Duchovny's real dog, Blue. Gillian Anderson actually put a live cricket in her mouth during the filming of the episode, 'Humbug'.

The two investigators pair up sporadically in each episode



Skinner's Office might be ordinary-looking, but it doesn't mean there's nothing funny going on

STEVE O

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 58
Static backgrounds, dodgy likenesses and bog-standard animations

SOUND 88
Authentic voiceovers, great music and atmospheric sound effects

GAMEPLAY 56
It's no more advanced than the likes of Resident Evil 2 on PSone

LASTING APPEAL 70
There are three episodes which change if you're playing Mulder or Scully

An unoriginal and slightly dull survival horror in the Resident Evil mould, the brilliant X-Files atmosphere and £20 price tag will save it for fans of the show.

OVERALL SCORE 63

HOW IT COMPARES
RESIDENT EVIL
X-FILES: RESIST OR SERVE
SILENT HILL 3

RELEASE DATE
18 JUNE

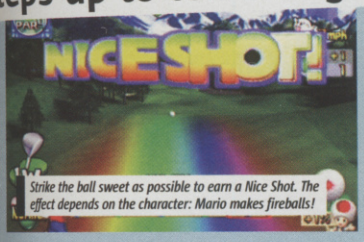
GAME INFO
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: NINTENDO
- DEV: CAMELOT
- WWW.NINTENDO-EUROPE.COM
- CONTACT: 01932 895390

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

MARIO GOLF
TOADSTOOL TOUR

Nintendo's mascot bravely steps up to tee off against Tiger



Strike the ball sweet as possible to earn a Nice Shot. The effect depends on the character: Mario makes fireballs!

At the end of every game you can watch highlights of the match and mess around with the replays

The balls look pretty big, but at least it doesn't take half an hour to find them all the time

YOUR MOTHER
Everyone has a humorous one-liner that can be used to taunt other players while they line up their shots. Nothing too scandalous, though...

We should never expect a straightforward round of golf from the likes of Mario, because we're not going to get it.

Compared to Tiger Woods or Microsoft Links, Toadstool Tour is light on authenticity, but heavy on fun. Multiplayer challenges are really where it's at, ramping up the pace of a sport so that younger relatives and reluctant friends may be convinced to take part.

Potting a golf ball is basically satisfying. It's a simple sense of achievement from which anyone can get a small firecracker of a thrill. Problem is, to reach that point there's so much walking, waiting and lining up of the ball that most people who enjoy – say – shooting stuff or racing cars, find golf dead dull. The premise of Mario Golf is to liven up the proceedings, give us something to chuckle about while we're waiting our turn, and, crucially, other stuff to aim for in addition to just holes.

YOU GOTTA LAUGH

Whether you're comfortable with the whole Mario thing or not, you'd be a gaming snob to turn your nose up at the varied and engrossing side games on offer, in addition to the main Tournament itself. All of which are designed to boost your appreciation of the skills involved playing golf. Mario themes such as Warp Pipes (for shortcuts) and Piranha Plants (deadly ball-biting obstacles!) are masterfully woven into the mix. Even someone unfamiliar with Mario lore will soon get the gist.

Control is basic, however, especially if you're in the swing with the new analog approach adopted by EA and Microsoft. In Toadstool Tour, it remains the tried-and-tested taps of the button to control power and accuracy, plus spin on the ball. This is dumbed down further by defaulting to Automatic control, dictating just shot and power for totally clueless players.

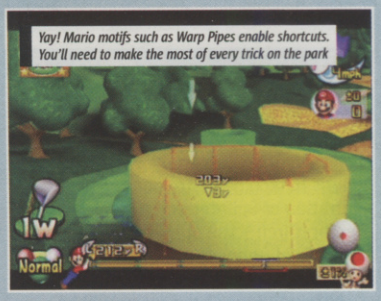
It's the distinctly fantasy courses that give TT honour among its more serious rivals. Strange, though, that you have to play through four relatively 'sane' tournaments before reaching the Piranha Plant-infested ranges belonging to Princess Peach. But the short slog is worth it, and the game comes to life with bizarre Mario-themed obstacles, magical shortcuts and comedic booby traps. ✷

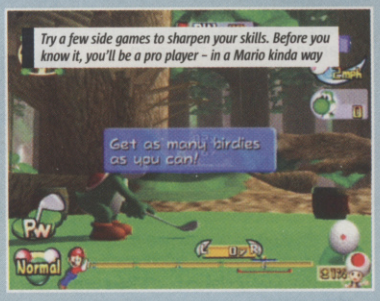
PREVIOUS GAMES
- Mario Kart: Double Dash!!, Super Mario Advance, Mario Party

HARD FACTS
- Total number of players to tee off against: 4
- Number of challengers to take on: 30
- Play modes include Tournament, Stroke Play and Doubles

DID YOU KNOW?
- Golfer's elbow, which apparently hurts like hell, can be prevented by squeezing tennis balls to build up your forearms.

Lakitu, the cloud dude, makes his customary appearance as the 'Ready, Set, Go' official at the start of each round


Yay! Mario motifs such as Warp Pipes enable shortcuts. You'll need to make the most of every trick on the park



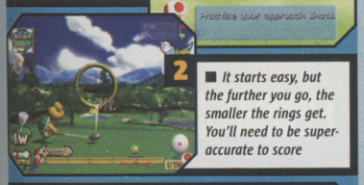
Try a few side games to sharpen your skills. Before you know it, you'll be a pro player – in a Mario kinda way

KING OF CLUBS

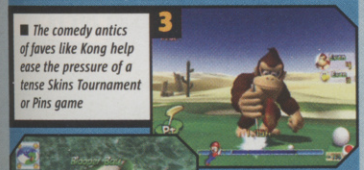
Your golf skills improve massively after smacking the ball through floating rings, or targeting tiny coins. What crazy kind of golf is this?

Such gameplay modes separate Toadstool Tour from the likes of Tiger Woods. Every mode tightens the screws by limiting the number of strokes or clubs available and so on, and the further you progress, the tougher it gets.

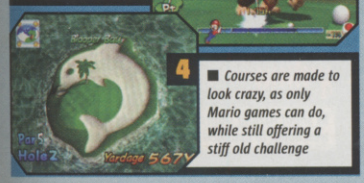
There are tons of different game modes, with lots to come back for to get your magical coins' worth



It starts easy, but the further you go, the smaller the rings get. You'll need to be super-accurate to score



The comedy antics of faves like Kong help ease the pressure of a tense Skins Tournament or Pins game



Courses are made to look crazy, as only Mario games can do, while still offering a stiff old challenge

Chomping on chains, and the pleasure of sinking the ball through a Warp Pipe are a million miles away from Tiger Woods

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS — 82
Charming, childlike appeal as you'd expect from Mario. The style is simple but we like it

SOUND — 80
Those jolly Mario tunes plinkity-plonk at every available opportunity so smile along

GAMEPLAY — 83
Doesn't aspire to golfing greatness, but the objectives are fun straightforward

LASTING APPEAL — 87
There's always going to be time for a spot of Mario Golf on your GameCube

Might not get the party started, but Toadstool Tour will help things swing along with any group of friends looking to liven up an afternoon or evening

OVERALL SCORE 83

HOW IT COMPARES
- LINKS 2004
- TOADSTOOL TOUR
- TIGER WOODS 2004

RELEASE DATE 18 JUNE

GAME INFO COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: EIDOS
- DEV: ION STORM
- HTTP://WWW.THIEF3.COM/
- CONTACT: 0870 9000222

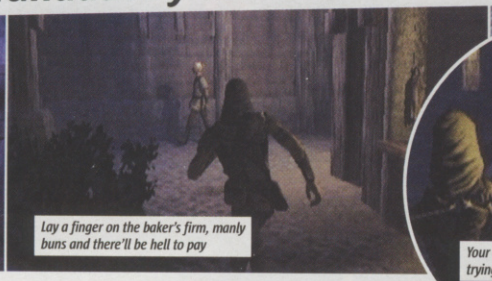
THIEF DEADLY SHADOWS

CVG SILVER AWARD

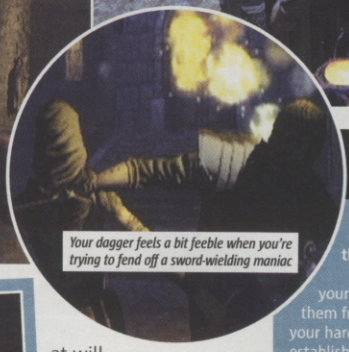
Loot and pillage the dump-splattered streets of old as the granddaddy of stealth returns

If the Thieves Guild saw you being this dozy and careless, you'd be out on your ear

The real-time lighting means you'll have to stay nimble to avoid being spotted in the shifting glow



Lay a finger on the baker's firm, manly buns and there'll be hell to pay



Your dagger feels a bit feeble when you're trying to fend off a sword-wielding maniac

Back in the days when developer's were falling over themselves to puke out the next great hi-octane Doom clone, the original Thief game slipped out of the shadows to offer a sneaky tonic to the limb-blasting carnage.

Swapping gun-blazing rampage for shadowy subterfuge, the game practically birthed a whole new genre from its willfully different stealth womb.

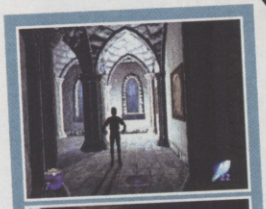
RETURN OF THE REPROBATE

Six years on, Ion Storm has resurrected Garret, the world's most infamous thief and ugliest videogame hero, for a whole new generation of gamers. Forget the generic hi-tech gadgetry and terrorist infiltration of Splinter Cell, Metal Gear and their brethren – the oppressively gloomy tale of Thief unravels on the plague-ridden cobbles of a moonlit medieval city.

Although fans of the series will be immediately familiar with the setting, anyone brought up on the modern day stealth dirge will be in for a refreshing fright. You won't find any Bond-style gizmos and guns to aid your archaic anarchy here – in ye olde world of torchlight and tuberculosis, all you've got is a bunch of ingenious arrow tips, some primitive melee weapons, your criminal wits and a hastily inked map.

With such an abysmal arsenal at your disposal, you're forced to brush the dust off your brain cells and call up every last inch of cunning to successfully infiltrate your targets and complete missions.

The levels are so ingeniously designed that there's often dozens of different routes you can take to fulfill your objective. Need to break into that heavily guarded mansion? Try slipping through an open window, pick-pocketing a guard to steal the key to the side door or simply run screaming through the main entrance like a kamikaze banshee with dagger at the ready.

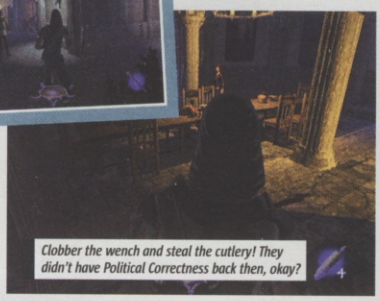


ROUTES OF ALL EVIL

The bewilderingly open-ended stages don't stop there either. You'll stumble across nattering cronies while you stalk through the night and, if you stick around to hear them through, you'll get hints on sub-directives and missions you can undertake at will.

This sheer freedom of movement – breaking away from a main goal to do your own bidding – is fekkin' fantastic.

Rather than being forced down a linear path, you can spend hours and hours looting ramshackle dwellings, making you feel less a videogame stooge and more of a real underworld mastermind.

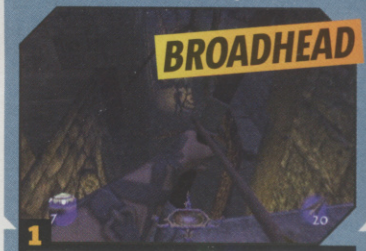


Clobber the wench and steal the cutlery! They didn't have Political Correctness back then, okay?

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

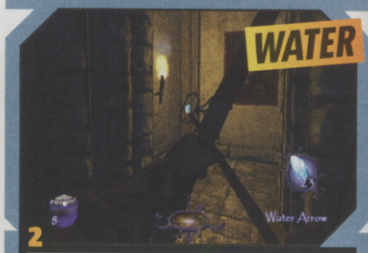
Successful skulkery requires careful use of your array of arrows, which are themed around fire, water and earth.

You'll need to keep a healthy stock in your arsenal, which either means pillaging them from houses and hiding holes or trading your hard-earned loot in one of the illegal establishments down Black Alley.



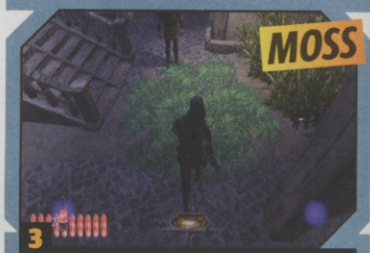
1 BROADHEAD

■ Use your standard-issue flesh-piercer to snipe foes from a distance. Hide the bodies in the shadows, mind



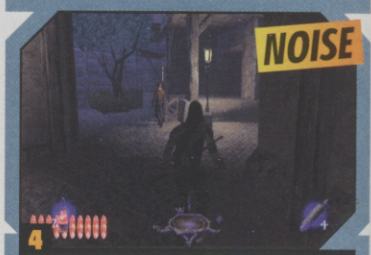
2 WATER

■ Great for dousing torches in tight corners. Once out, you're free to move without fear of revealing yourself



3 MOSS

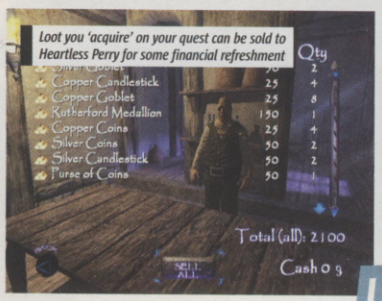
■ Smear moss across noisy surfaces like stone and metal to soften your footsteps and sneak to safety



4 NOISE

■ Shoot fizzling shafts into dark spots to get stubborn watchmen to abandon their posts and investigate

Dust down your bludgeoning skills on this shapeless bloated sack – think of Rik Waller for added satisfaction



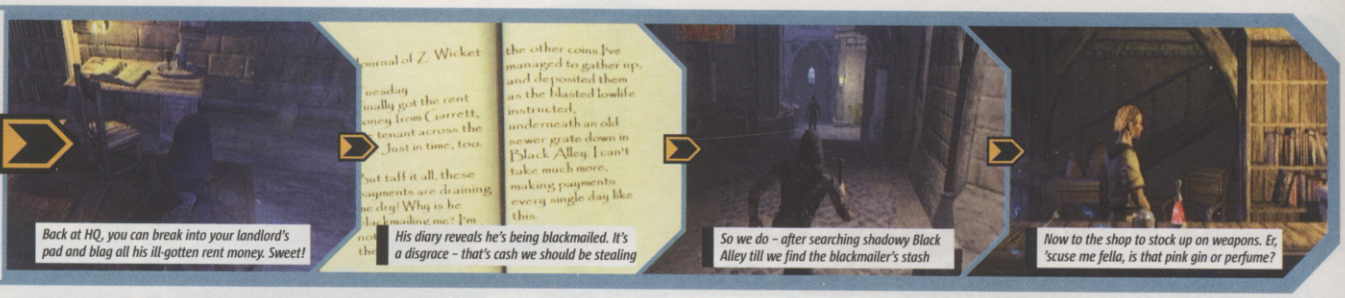
Keep to the shadows and don't make a sound – the guard's got a much bigger tool than you

"BRUSH THE DUST OFF YOUR BRAIN CELLS AND CALL UP EVERY LAST INCH OF CUNNING"

■ As you progress through the game, you'll stumble on clues and conversations leading to optional sub-quests and untold wealth.

BONUS BOUNTY

Although you're usually only rewarded with minor trinkets for your efforts, these can be fenced for cold, hard cash for trading.



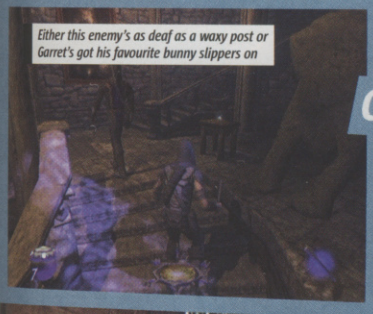
Back at HQ, you can break into your landlord's pad and blag all his ill-gotten rent money. Sweet!

His diary reveals he's being blackmailed. It's a disgrace – that's cash we should be stealing

So we do – after searching shadowy Black Alley till we find the blackmailer's stash

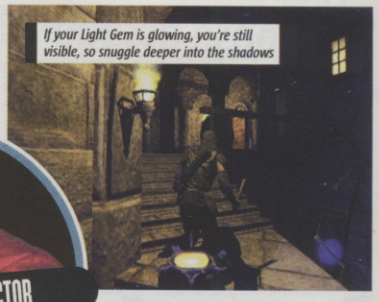
Now to the shop to stock up on weapons. Er, 'scuse me fella, is that pink gin or perfume?

"A REFRESHING ALTERNATIVE TO THE ANTI-TERRORIST CLICHÉS OF CURRENT STEALTH 'EM UPS"

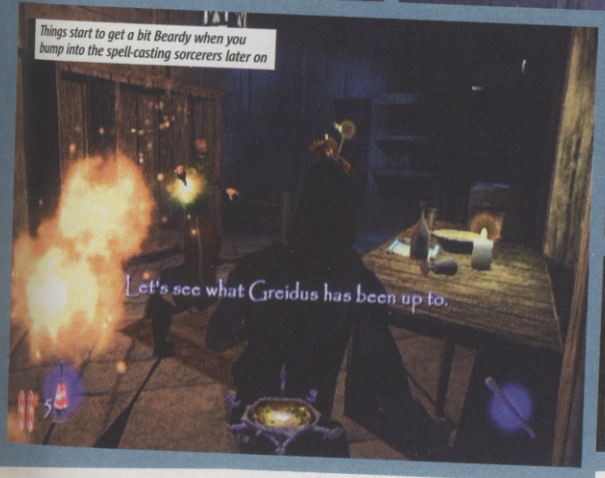


Either this enemy's as deaf as a waxy post or Garret's got his favourite bunny slippers on

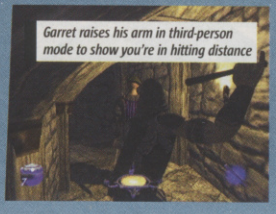
The shadowy rat-infested streets make a nice change to the crate-crammed warehouses of most stealthers



If your Light Gem is glowing, you're still visible, so snuggle deeper into the shadows

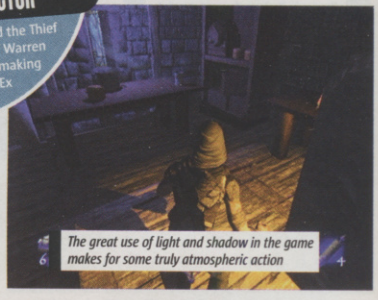


Things start to get a bit Beardy when you bump into the spell-casting sorcerers later on



Garret raises his arm in third-person mode to show you're in hitting distance

Molest a lock till you feel a rumbling – you've either picked it or got wind



The great use of light and shadow in the game makes for some truly atmospheric action

RESPECT TO SPECTOR

The resurrection of Garret and the Thief series was the brainchild of Warren Spector – best known for making the acclaimed Deus Ex series.

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Deus Ex: Invisible War, Anachronox, Deus Ex 1, Daikatana (Shhh)

HARD FACTS

■ Ten arcane additions to your armoury including climbing gloves, a mechanical eye and exploding mines

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Even though Thief was the original first-person sneak 'em up, Kojima's MGS series beat it under the finishing line as the first big stealth-themed game by a mere two months back in 1998 on PSone – only it was in third-person.

GLORIOUS GRIME

Enhancing the engrossing gameplay are the beautifully realistic medieval visuals. Primitive light sources bathe the environments in a puny glow while the jet-black shadows are as deep as night.

While Garret's Shadow Gem remains from the original game – brightening and dimming as your visibility alters – the light and shadow is so well defined that hiding under the cover of darkness is obvious and intuitive without having to resort to interface gimmicks. Sound effects are just as class – footsteps and voices fade in and out as your razor-sharp opponents go on patrols, and the noise of your own movements (whether clattering across surfaces or knocking over objects) ensures that you'll always know when you've broken cover.

Somehow even the dank settings manage to look gloomily gorgeous

Thankfully, all this atmospheric free-roaming sneakery is supported by a masterful control scheme for Garret's first console outing. Whether in third-person, or the now fairly superfluous first-person mode, your anti-hero moves using a standard FPS dual-analogue system. Combat is handled by pummelling the R-trigger, while all interactive objects are molested by first centering them on the screen until they highlight, then hitting Use. The only real niggle with the control set-up is that the crucial map is buried deep within the options screen rather than being handily accessible at all times.

BUBONIC BLISS

While its true that this latest version of the series barely breaks the mould set by its PC-only predecessors, the game still offers a refreshing alternative to the anti-terrorist clichés of current stealth 'em ups – especially on console.

Some people might be frustrated by Garret's intentionally low-tech armoury and lack of acrobatic agility compared to the over-complicated abilities of modern sneak-masters but the living, breathing, open-ended world of Thief makes it well worth stepping out of the shadow of Sam and Solid Snake to play. ✳

MOIST WITH CHOICE

The extensive environments are mind-bogglingly non-linear and awash with ways to achieve goals.

You're usually given clues to aid your strategy formation at the beginning of a level, but that doesn't mean the suggested method is the easiest or most effective route to take. Early on, you're expected to infiltrate the homestead of a nefarious nobleman. Here are just a few ways you can proceed.

■ Extinguish a courtyard torch to alert the chef to your presence and he'll unlock the sidedoor as planned

■ Sneak around the house to the stables, up the boxes and into the building via an open window

■ If you're feeling feisty, whip out your blade and charge headlong through the main entrance

GRAEME

CVG 2ND OPINION

It lacks the big budget thrills of MGS and next to Sam Fisher, Garret's as agile as a sack of lead spuds. But the immersive gameplay and freedom to explore had me playing into the wee hours. The sub-fantasy settings and sack-clothed stooges initially seem silly after Splinter Cell but put your po-faced prejudices aside and it'll sneak up and grab you by the nads.

MATT W

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 97
Stunning use of light and dark compliments the deliciously dank visual splendour

SOUND 88
Minimalist music builds the mood while the sounds and voices bring Garret's world to life

GAMEPLAY 88
Unapologetically similar to previous outings but still provides a swag bag of furtive fun

LASTING APPEAL 90
It's a meaty adventure on its own, but the countless sub-quests will last for ages

The game mechanics might seem simple but the freedom and depth is astonishing – a dark and engrossing return for the Godfather of Stealth.

OVERALL SCORE 89

HOW IT COMPARES
SPLINTER CELL: PT
THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
METAL GEAR SOLID 2

RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO
9 JULY	COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1	* PUB: CAPCOM * DEV: CAPCOM * WWW.CAPCOM.COM/ONI3 * CONTACT: 020 8846 2550

ONIMUSHA 3 DEMON SIEGE

Ancient demon armies – they don't like those assault rifles up 'em!

CVG GOLD AWARD

Now that's a nice staircase... Must be worth a few bob, especially with the freehold

Horrific scenes along the Champs Elysées in Paris as demons run riot

Jacques' trademark finishing move – one leg pins down the enemy then a quick execution with a bullet to the head

Michelle Aubert is Jacques' girlfriend. Elle est belle

Your mate with the Xbox has probably been giving you stick about Ninja Gaiden lately.

Reminding you how you can't get that sort of thing on PS2, and look at them graffiks blah blah. Well, pretty soon you'll have Onimusha 3 to shove under his nose (that begs to be broken). That'll shut him up. He might even go a bit red.

We love the Capcom tradition of no expense spared on presentation, especially when it comes to action adventures. Perhaps we're starting at the shallow end before wading in deeper to what matters – how it plays – but in the case of Onimusha 3 you'll find the presentation really counts for a lot. Oni 3's luxuries are apparent from the second the PS2 logo dissolves into the greatest CG movie sequence outside of Clone Wars or Return Of The King at the flicks. You'll probably reset the PS2 to watch it again, before you start playing.

STRANGERS IN STRANGE LANDS

Your first encounter in Oni 3 is a grand-scale battle outside the Anshi Castle, in feudal Japan. Samanosuke makes a welcome return, and we quickly shake off our rustiness on all the old moves and discover others that are modified or completely new. Simple combos, whose nature of strikes is defined by the weapon, are now aided by sudden-death strikes that can fell an opponent in one dramatic blow. The struggle is once more against Oda Nobunaga's demon army, but this time around Nobby is not content with defiling one world, the ancient world that he loves to haunt, but wants command of the present day too. This is Capcom's cue to have a little fun with the Onimusha universe, and invite a major Hollywood talent to help fulfil the legend.

SOUL SURVIVORS

Samanosuke and Jacques wear amulets that absorb the souls of demons, and allow them to come back from the dead as demons themselves!

ALL THE BIG GUNS

Capcom has enlisted gruff actor dude Jean Reno, who famously played the assassin in French movie Leon, and who you've probably seen in Mission Impossible or Godzilla. As elite soldier Jacques Blanc, he's as surprised as everyone else on the Champs Elysées to see winged demons appear through a magic portal and tear Parisians apart. Unlike the civilians who have become a screaming plat du jour for Nobunaga's demons, Jacques is armed with a machine gun and a will to fight.

I DON'T BELONG HERE

At this point you may worry that your perfect Samurai epic has been ruined at the whim of a Capcom marketing exec, but don't worry, the contrast of ancient monsters invading modern Paris works fantastically. Present-day settings of skyscrapers and

This is something you get to fight quite early on, believe it or not! Its rotor-like arms knock Samanosuke for sixosuke!!

DEMON WARRIORS

Perhaps the coolest moment in the game is when Samanosuke or Jacques return from the dead as demon warriors, glowing with supernatural power, and armed with unstoppable magic attacks.

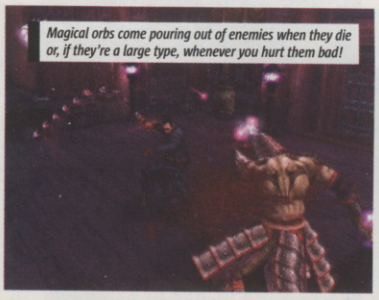
To make this happen you need to have collected enough special orbs. It's only used as a last resort, but all the same it's effin' amazin'!

1 ■ Confrontations like this are always tricky. You'll be wishing for a second chance, and you could just get it

2 ■ With enough soul power your character will rise from the dead, and return more powerful than ever!

3 ■ Demon magic is hard on your enemies. There's no shame in using it, brother. So, give them HELL

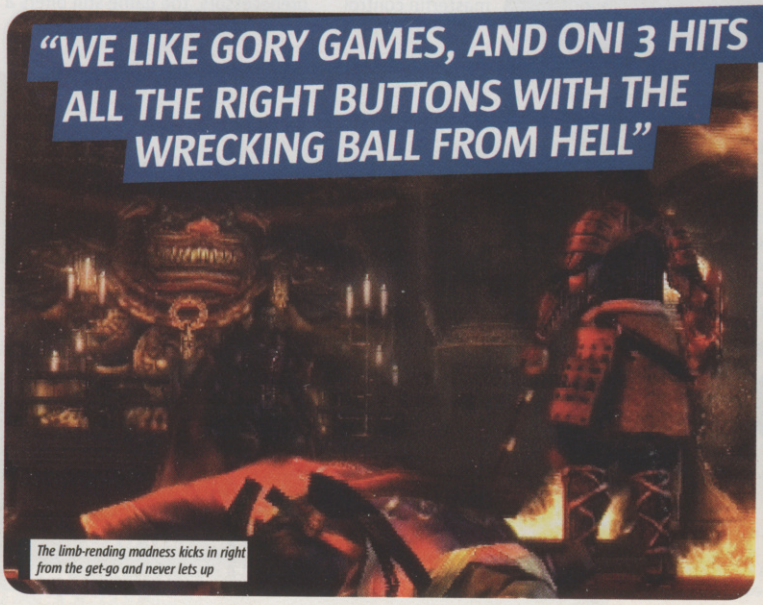
4 ■ The effects don't last for ever though, so be ready to back off when your powers return to normal



Magical orbs come pouring out of enemies when they die or, if they're a large type, whenever you hurt them bad!

You've more enemies to contend with at one time than in Ninja Gaiden, plus it looks pretty as a picture. Bloodier too!

"WE LIKE GORY GAMES, AND ONI 3 HITS ALL THE RIGHT BUTTONS WITH THE WRECKING BALL FROM HELL"

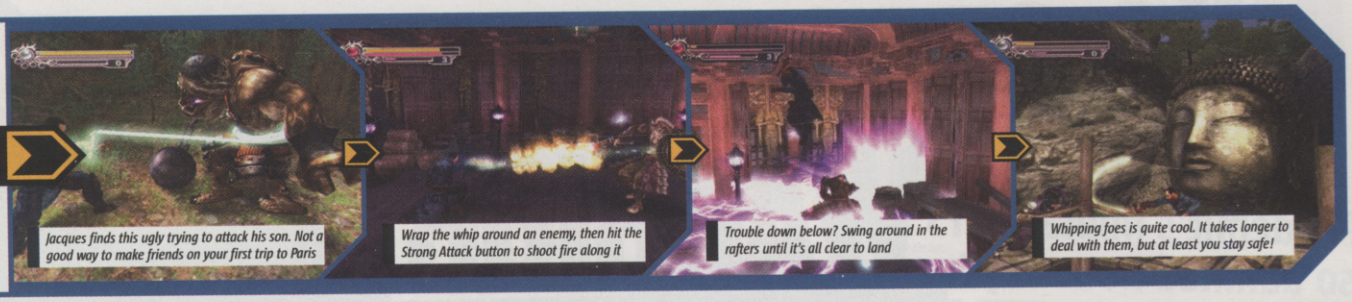


The limb-rending madness kicks in right from the get-go and never lets up

You're gonna have fun learning how to get the best from Jacques' demon whip. It starts off as a fairly feeble green tendril, but

WHIP CRACK AWAY!

can be upgraded to become a row of segmented blades sure to hurt anything. It can even lasso enemies before engulfing them in flames.



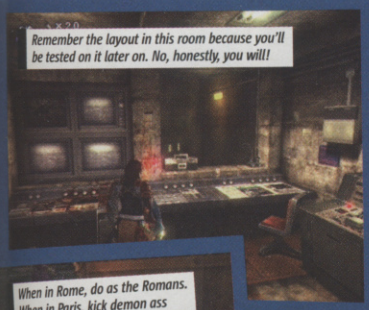
Jacques finds this ugly trying to attack his son. Not a good way to make friends on your first trip to Paris

Wrap the whip around an enemy, then hit the Strong Attack button to shoot fire along it

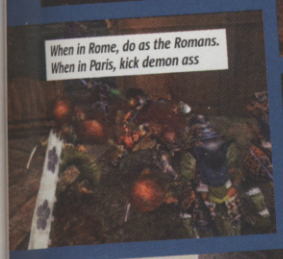
Trouble down below? Swing around in the rafters until it's all clear to land

Whipping foes is quite cool. It takes longer to deal with them, but at least you stay safe!

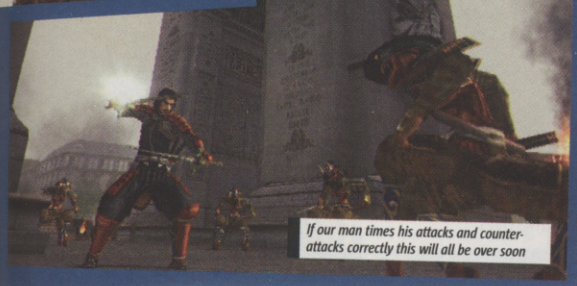
"AN EPIC CHALLENGE THAT LOOKS AND PLAYS WITH EQUAL BRILLIANCE, DEMON SIEGE HAS IT ALL"



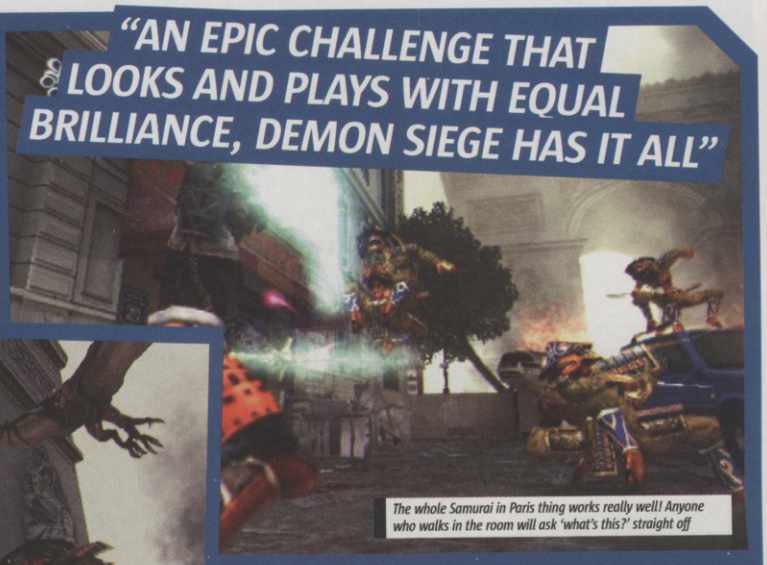
Remember the layout in this room because you'll be tested on it later on. No, honestly, you will!



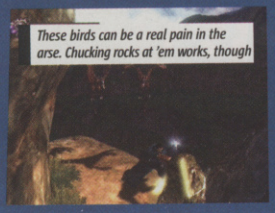
When in Rome, do as the Romans. When in Paris, kick demon ass



If our man times his attacks and counter-attacks correctly this will all be over soon

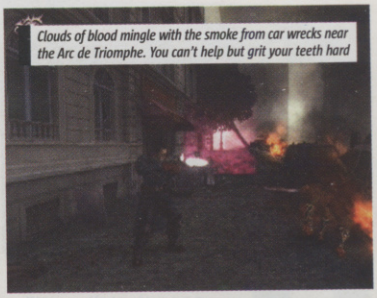


The whole Samurai in Paris thing works really well! Anyone who walks in the room will ask 'what's this?' straight off



These birds can be a real pain in the arse. Chucking rocks at 'em works, though

Kaneshiro Takeshi is the Japanese actor whose likeness is used for Samanosuke



Clouds of blood mingle with the smoke from car wrecks near the Arc de Triomphe. You can't help but grit your teeth hard

Jacques stocks up on a collection of soul orbs, powering up his spirit meter, his magic meter, and restoring health

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Resident Evil Code: Veronica X, Onimusha: Warlords, Onimusha 2: Samurai's Destiny, Dino Crisis 3

HARD FACTS

- 12 areas to protect
- Two different universes
- Three playable characters
- 12 different weapons
- 15 hours of gameplay

DID YOU KNOW?

- The Japanese word 'onimusha' translates as 'demon warrior'. Oni are common in Japanese folklore, and there are various kinds.

sewers are rendered with as much finesse as the ancient monuments and leafy pathways, while peppering ancient demons with Jacques' 21st Century weaponry feels well cool. We loved how the game has fun dropping Jacques and Sama into unfamiliar surroundings, often revealing how confused they are about what lies ahead. Seeing the two standing awkwardly side by side for the first time in Paris is a moment to savour!

Visit shrines to upgrade your weapons with new magic powers

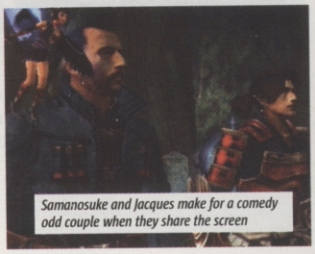
A GOOD WHIPPING

Oni 3 works better than Oni 2 as the emphasis is now back on action rather than exploration – save the searching antics for platformers like Jak, we say. The return of the Samanosuke versus Nobunaga theme is also very welcome, after what was really a side-story in the weaker previous game.

Gameplay follows the tried-and-tested Oni formula of muchos battling punctuated with solving simple puzzles. Jacques has the slickest new feature – a magical whip that also functions as a lasso and a rope swing. He gets this quite early on, relegating his machine-gun to finishing foes while they lie on the ground – the equivalent of Samanosuke's downward-stab finisher.

Although we had hoped the gun theme would be more prominent, the whip really does add new gameplay to the mix, like lassoing rafters to evade attacks or to position Jacques to make more effective strikes. Meanwhile Sama champions the familiar and still satisfying ways of the sword, which he does as spectacularly as befits a legendary Samurai warrior.

Overall, if you're looking for an epic challenge that looks and plays with equal brilliance, Demon Siege has it all. ✷



Samanosuke and Jacques make for a comedy odd couple when they share the screen

YEN'S THE MONEY

The game's amazing opening movie was directed by Donnie Yen, who ranks among Hong Kong cinema's most celebrated actor/directors.

It shows Samanosuke battling his way through an airship, before bringing it crashing to the ground. The choreography is astounding, and the special effects will leave you gasping. It's as good as anything at the cinema – if only it lasted an hour!

You can't be sure who the hero is, although you have a pretty good idea. Then the mask falls away...

Great moves aren't good news for the demon army as Samanosuke flip-kicks his way through

See this masterpiece, even if you have to watch it on a mate's PS2! It's short, but it's one great show!

CVG 2ND OPINION

GRAEME

Onimusha 3 displays nothing new or original, but who cares? This is what happens when you get a bunch of guys who know exactly how to make an awesome game and squeeze the most from PS2. The plot should be crap but it's somehow not, Jean Reno frenches it up just enough, and the cool bosses add variety to the slashing. A Samurai masterpiece.

CVG VERDICT

PAUL

GRAPHICS — 97

The best of PS2 – brilliantly conceived ideas, worked up in stunning detail

SOUND — 94

We love the atmospheric, big movie score. Powerful sound effects too. Oh boy

GAMEPLAY — 88

The whip-o-doom is a great new addition. All good, solid action – no complaints

LASTING APPEAL — 80

A challenging 12 or 15 hours for guys who like to try for style and perfection... and secrets

OVERALL SCORE 93

This is easily the best Oni in the series, having gone back to the heavily action-oriented and always spectacular premise of the classic original.

HOW IT COMPARES

- ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY
- ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE
- ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS

RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO	ONLINE GAMING
2 JULY	COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2	PUB: THQ DEV: PANDEMIC STUDIOS HTTP://WWW.FULLSPECTRUMWARRIOR.COM/ CONTACT: 01483 767656	TWO-PLAYER CO-OP MODE

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

If war is hell, why is Pandemic's military RTS so damned heavenly?

CVG GOLD AWARD

The groovy wobble-cam looks just like real-life news footage as it jiggles behind your men

This sniper's too well protected to tackle alone – hop between the abandoned autos to sneak to safety

Three against one and he's still standing – perhaps it's time to rethink your strategy

Tanks and tactics – if you saw 24 on the telly you'll have a pretty good idea what to expect from Full Spectrum Warrior.

Taking place in a war-ravaged Middle-Eastern hell-hole over the course of a single day, FSW recklessly yanks out your pin of inexperience and tosses you, grenade-like, into the thick of the strategic squad-based action.

This is an entirely different beast to the squad-based thrills of SOCOM and Rainbow Six – FSW is less of a tactical shooter and more an all-out RTS game, albeit one played out at ground level in the field.

Rather than controlling your Alpha and Bravo teams directly, you'll merely issue appropriate orders and wait for them to comply. Movement requires you to position your context-sensitive cursor at your chosen destination and your men will adopt the safest, most logical formation when they arrive.

Once in a safe zone, you're free to continue to your next objective or engage the enemy as necessary. Combat simply involves tapping the X button and positioning the on-screen cursor to assign a Fire Sector – all enemies in the selected area are gun-fodder if your team can get them in their sights.

On top of Standard fire there's Suppressing Fire, which keeps threats down until your other squad is in a position to attack, or lob one of your limited but invaluable grenades into the fray.

In most cases, the only way to end a stand-off, with both sides firing from under completely safe cover, is to command your second squad along a different route and take out the enemy from a different vantage point while they're distracted.

What's more, you don't have a limitless supply of fresh-faced rookies to rip through on the battlefield – lose a member of your squad and that's it, game over.

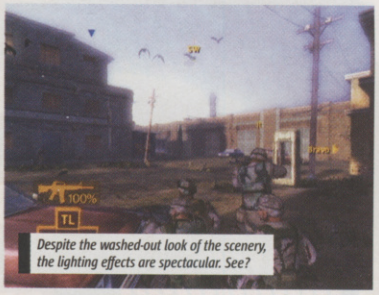
COVER YO' ASS

The emphasis here is on stealth and strategy though, and you're actively encouraged to use your surroundings for protection – failure to stick to cover often has dire consequences.

Importantly, and in sharp contrast to traditional tactical shooters, you'll rarely encounter bad guys simply mincing about the landscape – most use cover as intelligently and effectively as you.

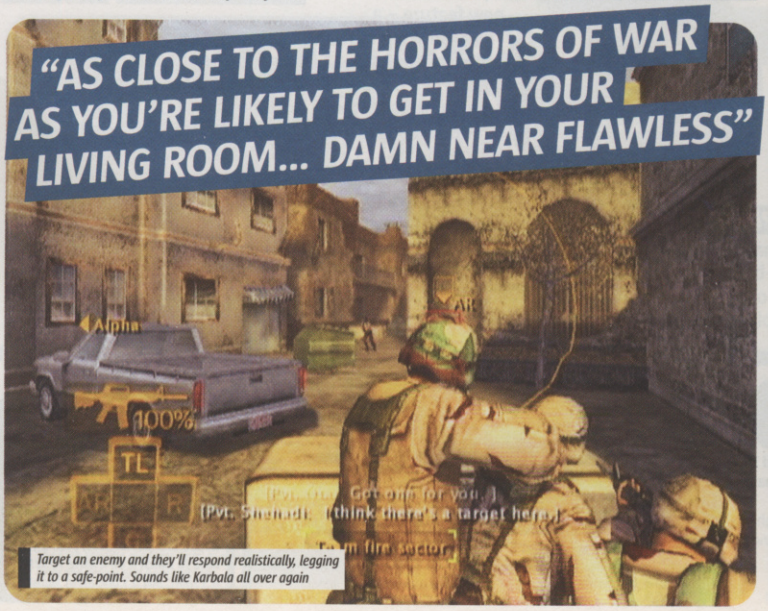
Opponents use cover as craftily as you – a well-timed grenade will wipe away their smiles... and faces

Hide behind this car too long and the enemy gunfire will shred it to pieces. Yipe!


Despite the washed-out look of the scenery, the lighting effects are spectacular. See?

As the day progresses, you'll notice subtle variation in the weather – it's still dawn right now

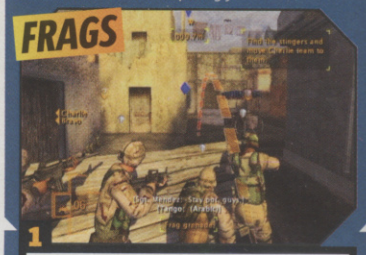
"AS CLOSE TO THE HORRORS OF WAR AS YOU'RE LIKELY TO GET IN YOUR LIVING ROOM... DAMN NEAR FLAWLESS"


Target an enemy and they'll respond realistically, legging it to a safe-point. Sounds like Karbala all over again

GRAB A GRENADE

As well as Standard and Suppressing Fire, there's a barrage of projectile weapons to chuck in the direction of your enemies.

There's a standard frag, grenade-launcher, smoke canister and mortar attacks to aid you in your quest. Remember though, unlike normal ammo, you can't restock your grenades back at a CASEVAC so use them sparingly.



1 ■ Standard grenades are great for taking out enemies when there's no other way to penetrate their cover

2 ■ This targets more localised areas with a high-powered blast – great at taking out cars used as cover

3 ■ For situations where there is simply no cover to use as protection. Deploy the smoke and leg it to safety

4 ■ Indirect fire can prove invaluable when faced with heavily armoured and impassable vehicles like tanks

■ The GPRS is just one of FSW's ingenious gameplay ideas. Not only does it provide a pint-sized satellite image of your surrounding area but, best of all, hitting the X button summons a chopper to recon the area and update the display with enemy intel.

POCKET POWER

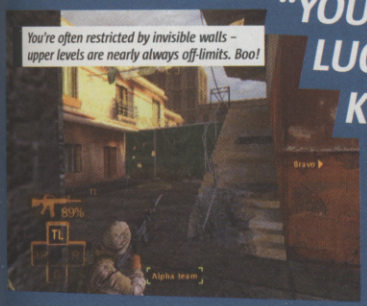
Whip out your pocket pal for information on nearby objective points and CASEVAC sites

Once you call out the chopper it'll take a few minutes to scout your current location

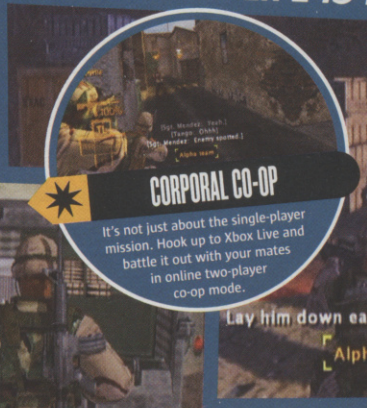
Stay put and you'll be rewarded with detailed intel on the closest enemy threat

Now you can move more easily into unknown areas like this tank-infested scrapyard

"YOU'LL ACTUALLY CARE WHEN YOU'RE LUGGING YOUR MAN BACK TO BASE, KNOWING HIS LIFE IS IN YOUR HANDS"

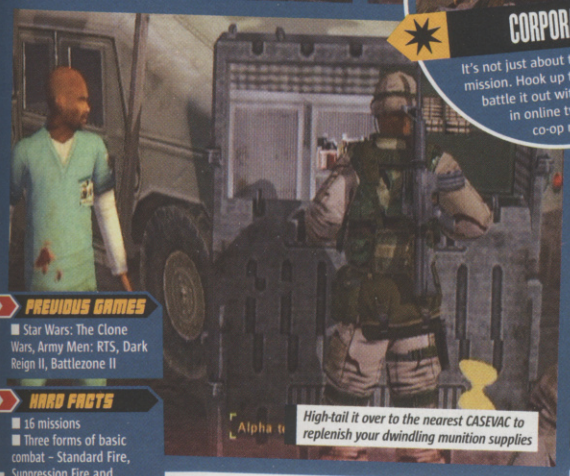


You're often restricted by invisible walls – upper levels are nearly always off-limits. Boo!

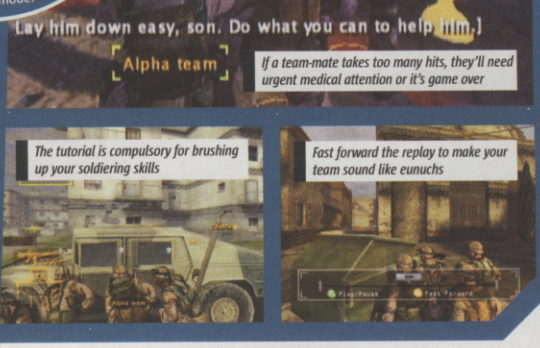


CORPORAL CO-OP

It's not just about the single-player mission. Hook up to Xbox Live and battle it out with your mates in online two-player co-op mode.



High-tail it over to the nearest CASEVAC to replenish your dwindling munition supplies



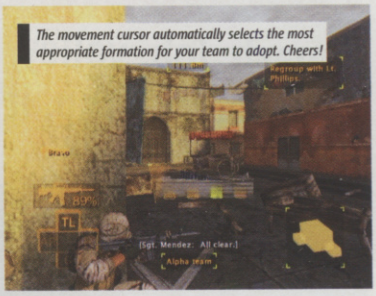
Lay him down easy, son. Do what you can to help him.

Alpha team

If a team-mate takes too many hits, they'll need urgent medical attention or it's game over

The tutorial is compulsory for brushing up your soldiering skills

Fast forward the replay to make your team sound like eunuchs



The movement cursor automatically selects the most appropriate formation for your team to adopt. Cheers!

Some missions call for the safe return of any casualties in the field – try not to drop them

PREVIOUS GAMES

■ Star Wars: The Clone Wars, Army Men: RTS, Dark Reign II, Battlezone II

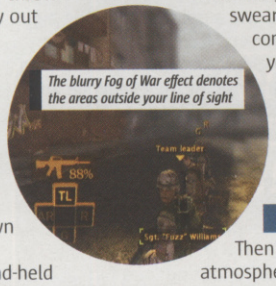
HARD FACTS

■ 16 missions
■ Three forms of basic combat – Standard Fire, Suppression Fire and Bounding Fire
■ Four projectile attacks – frag, smoke grenade, rocket -launcher and indirect fire
■ Online co-operative play

DID YOU KNOW?

■ Full Spectrum Warrior started life as a war simulation commissioned by the US Military to train its soldiers in tactical manoeuvres from the comfort of their sofas. Once Pandemic completed the project, the basic technology and gameplay was tweaked into the majestic videogame offering we see today.

Adding yet another layer of strategy to the proceedings, if a member of your team is injured in battle, you'll need to hoist him onto your shoulders and transport him to the nearest CASEVAC for immediate medical attention. This means you'll have to throw your current strategy out the window and venture into unknown territory before your man bleeds to death.



The blurry Fog of War effect denotes the areas outside your line of sight

PHWOAR-FARE

There's plenty more ingenious stuff thrown into the mix – like a stunning wobbly hand-held camera that follows your men about their missions, and the clever replay function that allows you to rewind, wince at your cock-ups and jump back into the action before it all went horribly wrong. Such attention to detail makes the whole experience a real joy – albeit a gritty, grimly realistic one.

Plus your team is stuffed genuine, well-rounded characters who'll laugh, cry, joke and swear. You'll actually come to care when you're lugging your man back to base with blood gushing from his wounds, knowing his life is in your hands.

IN THE ZONE

Then factor in some atmospheric graphics and sound and Pandemic has created a wholly believable war zone in which to stage its finely honed action.

What's so captivating is FSW's constant assault on your senses – whether shaken by explosions or hanging on live-or-die decisions, you are always in the thick of it.

Aside from minor issues (like a few repetitive objectives), it's an almost flawless experience. FSW is as about as close to the horrors of war as you're likely to get in your living room, and with the Iraq situation as it is, this should sell faster than shit off a shiny entrenching shovel. ✷

Shred your foes with white-hot lead by using the circle to assign your team's Fire Sector

UNDER COVER

Sticking to cover is instrumental to progress. Shields appear above your team and their combatants, indicating the level of cover currently provided.

If you're hiding behind destructible cover, such as crates or cars, your shield will diminish. You'll need to send your second team ahead to take out the threat from a different angle if the enemy is engaged behind impenetrable cover.

■ Sandbags and buildings provide permanent safe areas – perfect for taking out targets without danger

■ But the same is true for your opponents – while both of you are protected, you're in stale-mate

■ Send your other team round the back of buildings to find a new vantage point – take 'em out!

PETE'S CVG 2ND OPINION

You're gonna get a shock if you're expecting another in-your-face stealth and snipe fest like Rainbow Six, but Pandemic has successfully wittled a perfectly shaped shooter/ RTS hybrid out of a huge lump of gaming goodness. It's pretty unique to console and, while the heavy strategy focus might put off those with insatiable bloodlust, it's well worth a scope.

MATT'S CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 87
Strangely muted textures but explosions and lighting effects are simply stunning

SOUND 84
Team-mate banter and environmental sounds stick you deep in the action

GAMEPLAY 91
Amazingly intuitive yet addictive and bursting with tactical depth

LASTING APPEAL 88
After the expansive single-player, take the game online for co-op play and more

More thoughtful than your average tactical shooter and just as intense. Stunningly realised and immensely rewarding – war just shouldn't be this much fun.

OVERALL SCORE 92

HOW IT COMPARES
SOCOM II
FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
RAINBOW SIX 3

RELEASE DATE: 18 JUNE

GAME INFO: COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO:
- PUB: SONY
- DEV: NAMCO
- WWW.UK.PLAYSTATION.COM
- CONTACT: 0870 5998877

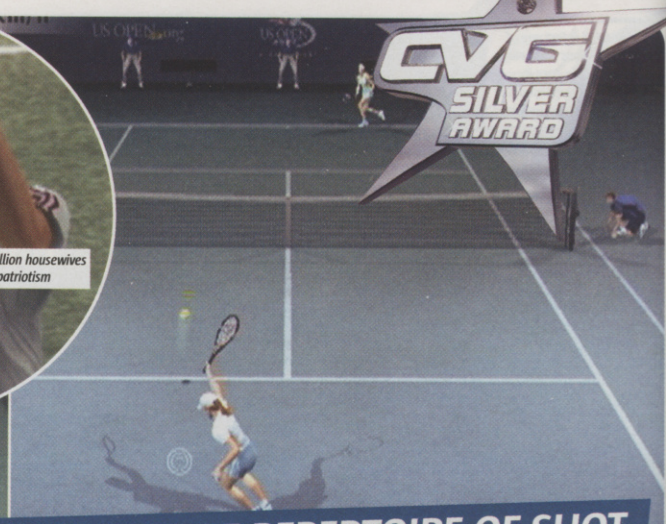
SMASH COURT TENNIS

PRO TOURNAMENT 2

Smash, lob, volley, chalk dust, fist-pumping, strawberries. Yup, it's tennis...

Tim pumps his fist and a million housewives go weak at the knees with patriotism

Andy Roddick shows off his special skill of hitting the ball very hard

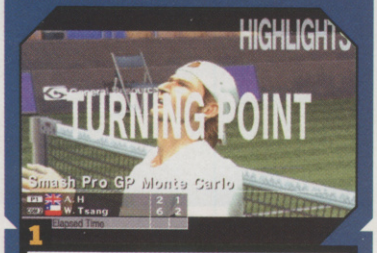


CVG SILVER AWARD

TURNING POINT

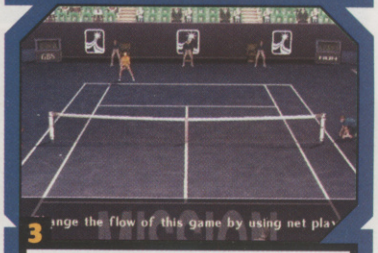
In the Pro Tour mode, you don't play full matches. Instead, each game is boiled down to a few key moments that you get to control.

These are dubbed Turning Points. For each of these, there's a Mission for you to fulfil, ranging from the simple to the hair-pullingly difficult. But hey, what's a good game without a little premature baldness?

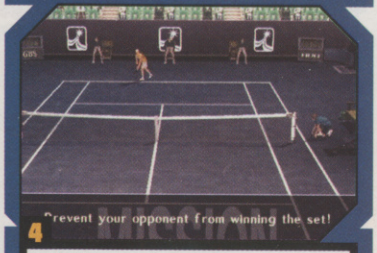


1 ■ The game simulates the action at high speed until there's a crucial moment in the action

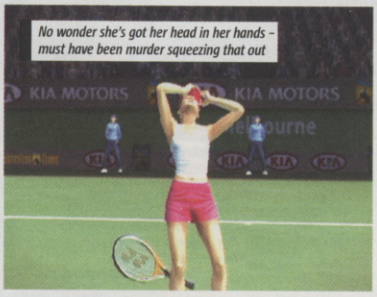
2 ■ When the action stops, you're given specific instructions on how to win the game or set



3 ■ Passing each Mission earns valuable bonus experience points – spend them wisely



4 ■ The higher in ranking your opponent is, the tougher the mission is to pass. Clever



No wonder she's got her head in her hands – must have been murder squeezing that out

"LEARN A WIDE REPERTOIRE OF SHOT TYPES AND PERFECT YOUR TIMING TO WIN A POINT AGAINST BIG PLAYERS"

Anyone for tennis? We certainly hope so, because Smash Court 2 serves up an ace for the PS2, offering one of the most addictive sporting experiences ever presented on a console.

It may be an arcade style game of tennis, but everything else on offer is as realistic as possible. Believe it or not, this is the first tennis game to offer the full Grand Slam of competitions. There are also 16 licensed players, featuring young gun Andy Roddick, the fist-pumping Tiger Tim and for non-tennis fans there's even the inclusion of Anna Kournikova.

The game is laid out in the same way as the original. There's an Arcade mode for a quick fix of action. Here you pick a real player and compete in cut-down versions of each tournament. If you want to beef up the play, you have to head into the options menu and change from the default settings to extend the action over the full six games and five sets.

AROUND THE WORLD

But the real meat and potatoes of the game can be found in the Pro Tour mode. Here you create a player from scratch, with the aim to get from rank outsider to Number One. It won't be easy. There are 250 opponents standing in your way, and you'll need to break into the top 100 if you want to enter the major tournaments.

You increase your seeding by competing in and winning the smaller tournaments and by improving your abilities in training. Here Smash Court borrows from Virtua Tennis with a selection of seemingly bizarre mini-games. The twist is they do actually improve your understanding of different shot types and ball placement.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Soulcalibur 2
- Tekken 4

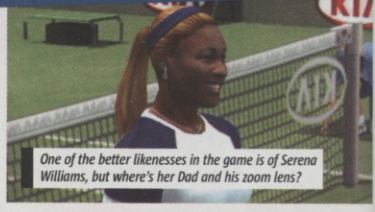
HARD FACTS
- 152 unlockable elements
- 16 real players
- Seven types of shot
- One Tiger Tim

DID YOU KNOW?
- Smash Court 2 is the new age of tennis, with Sampras and Agassi dropped for fresher faces... like Lleyton Hewitt! Er... fresh?

FOOD IS FOR WIMPS

You'll need super-skills to advance, as the top 100 players represent a major jump in difficulty. You'll have to learn the wide repertoire of shot types and perfect your timing to win a point against the big players. It's not a frustrating experience however – you'll be grateful for the challenge and utterly addicted as you try to increase your ranking.

The only downside for Smash Court is the existence of Top Spin over on the Xbox. The rival game still has the edge, especially with the advantage of online play. But if you're looking for a fun challenge and one of the most addictive sports games ever conceived, Smash Court 2 is well worth a lob and volley. ✷



One of the better likenesses in the game is of Serena Williams, but where's her Dad and his zoom lens?

Oh Anna... You can run, you can hide, but you can't escape Enrique's love... or play tennis!

It's been so long since Anna Kournikova was on a tennis court they have to circle the ball for her

Oh Tim... You may have lost, but just look at the British public on their feet behind you

CVG VERDICT

ALEX H

GRAPHICS — 83
The arenas look great – shame the players are a bit of a job lot

SOUND — 88
Umpires, excellent thwacks and plenty of oohs and ahhhs from the crowd

GAMEPLAY — 92
It's easy to learn, difficult to master and utterly, utterly addictive

LASTING APPEAL — 91
It'll take many hours to get through the Pro Tour and there's lots to unlock

Graphically it under-achieves but the rest is arcade brilliance. Long-lasting with absorbing action – not like real tennis at all, is it?

OVERALL SCORE 87

HOW IT COMPARES
- TOP SPIN
- SMASH COURT 2
- VIRTUA TENNIS 2

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

GAME INFO
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: KONAMI * DEV: KCTO
* WWW.KONAMISTUDIO.COM/AD3/DS/INDEX.HTML
* CONTACT: 01895 470506

DEADLY SKIES III

Picks a few bogeys out the sky but eventually goes down in flames

People take off, pilot a Boeing 747 for 22 hours from London to Sydney, and land – on their PC playing a flight simulator. This kind of person is clearly a mentalist. Surely the only kind of aircraft that are fun to fly are those with massive amounts of ordinance slung beneath their wings?

Giving you tons of aircraft and massive amounts of bombs, missiles and rockets, together with plenty of things to shoot them at, Deadly Skies III is Top Gun in a really, really bad mood. Simple controls mean targeting your many foes is easy, and it's not long before you've wiped your first bogeys all over the skies.

You'll get your hands on a hangar full of aircraft, including virtually every combat plane that's been built in the last 50 years – from WWII Spitfires right up to EuroFighters and F-22 Raptors.

The visuals are solid, with the focus on making the aircraft look as cool as possible. Some of the buildings and vehicles look a bit dodgy up close, but when the tracer bullets start flying and the missiles streaking left and right, the feel of aerial combat is good.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Cy Girls
- Deadly Skies II

HARD FACTS
- Number of flyable aircraft: over 130
- Number of missions: 60
- Number of playable characters: 20

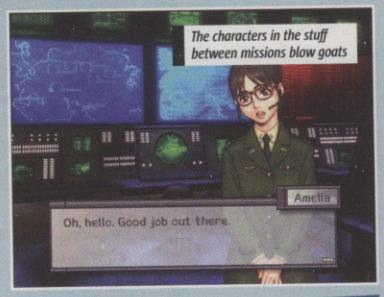
DID YOU KNOW?
- If you get far enough in Deadly Skies III, you get to pilot the spaceship out of Konami's legendary Gradius games!

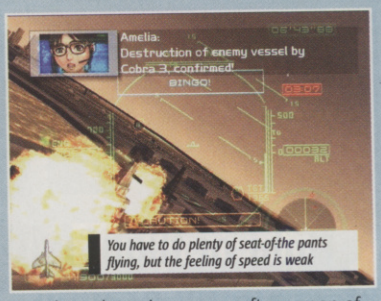
NEED FOR SPEED

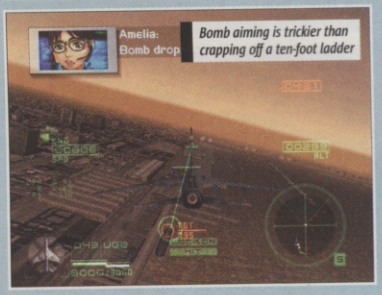
But crucially, for a game that relies upon the buzz of piloting supersonic aircraft, the feeling of speed in Deadly Skies is woefully lacking. When you watch back a post-mission replay it looks mint. But when you're playing – even with afterburners on full blast – it feels more like you're floating about in a balloon than splitting the air in a jet fighter.

To make things worse, it gets very bizarre in between missions. The game spins out a ridiculous, tedious, and utterly pointless plot using screen after screen of text accompanied by crappy comic book portraits. You end up having to button bash through a feature film's worth of this toss to get to each mission, by which point you realise you've clicked through all your objectives.

This is diet flight-sim stuff that spoils its non-stop blasting with slow-poke planes and too much crappy gabbing from rubbish characters. You definitely won't be flying this one for 22 hours straight. *







SIMS AND SAMS

Deadly Skies III is no simulator. You don't have to take off or land, and you don't have to know your flaps from your aerilons.

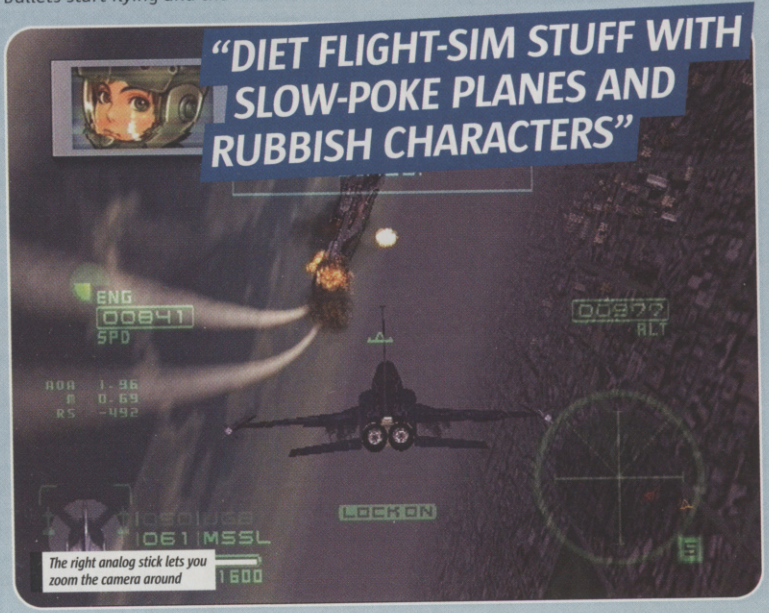
The emphasis is on sticking you right in the action with SAMS and tracer fire all around. And while it looks like something that only military buffs can enjoy on the outside, it plays more like a frenetic shoot 'em up.

1 ■ Bizarrely, the Novice configuration makes the game harder to play than Expert! Mad as a singing llama

2 ■ You can choose to play from the cockpit view if you like, which makes things needlessly harder

3 ■ Your aircraft can carry up to 80 air-to-air missiles. So, not exactly typical of today's jet fighters then

4 ■ Go too slow and your plane will stall – one of the slightly more realistic aspects of the game



CVG VERDICT

STEVE O

GRAPHICS 68
The planes are nice to look at, but the details on the ground are flat and featureless

SOUND 61
Plenty of radio chatter and engine noises – not much else unfortunately

GAMEPLAY 63
Lacks the feeling of speed and excitement you want from your kick-ass jet

LASTING APPEAL 70
If you do get into it, there are plenty of missions and aircraft to fly

Lightweight aerial shooter that homes straight into the action with heat-seeking missiles. Fun in short tracer bursts, but it sure ain't da bomb.

OVERALL SCORE 63

HOW IT COMPARES
CRIMSON SKIES
DEADLY SKIES III
ACE COMBAT 4

RELEASE DATE: NOW

GAME INFO: COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

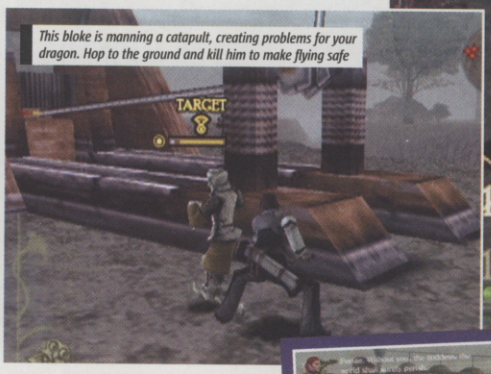
CONTACT INFO: PUB: TAKE-TWO * DEV: SQUARE-ENIX * WWW.SQUARE-ENIXUSA.COM /GAMES/DRAKENGARD * CONTACT: 01753 854444

DRAKENGARD

Fight or flight with a new hybrid hero and his grumpy dragon

Slash, slash, slash, block, slash, slash, magic. It's fun for a while, but it's no Ninja Gaiden

Inuart, always the one to overreact in a bad situation. Definitely press Start to skip here, we think. Get on with it



This bloke is manning a catapult, creating problems for your dragon. Hop to the ground and kill him to make flying safe

We all have our checklist of dos and don'ts when evaluating a new game. If you're a fan of RPGs, each destination must be more stupendous than the last, and you require strong emotional reasons to believe in characters you'll spend months developing. Action games are picked up and put down as you please, while RPGs, well, cancel all plans for the weekend because you won't want to break the flow.

We didn't imagine that a place between these contrasting genres could exist, but Square-Enix has recruited a team to walk the tightrope between action and game and RPG. Drakengard is a concept that finds it hard to settle in one place especially, and this edginess alienates as many players as it attracts.

There are clear references to the gameplay of Panzer Dragoon, and Dynasty Warriors when it gets down to the business of fighting – hardly bad examples to follow. In terms of role-play, the maturity and wit of the dialogue and unfolding plot is comparable to and even surpasses some of the best Square-Enix has produced – particularly since Final Fantasy started to become increasingly like Pop Idol.

The tricky part is trying to judge Drakengard as a whole, but you always get the sense that something valuable has become of mashing such uncomplementary game styles together. In a way, Drakengard feels like a bootleg – a fan's view of the way things could be if someone incredibly smart were to develop the idea.

I SAID... SIT!

The focus is on Caim, the smouldering and moody lead who is cool because he rides a ferocious dragon. In fact he has formed a mystical pact with this dragon, sharing the same life force. You discover very early on that Caim in fact detests dragons, making this quite a begrudging relationship, although of benefit to them both in fighting a common enemy – The Empire.

The aerial sections of the game are by far the most enjoyable, and are a worthy homage to the hugely undervalued Panzer Dragoon series, with fiery dragon breath and astonishing dragon magic combatting The Empire's ingenious airborne contraptions. However, it is also quite rewarding to control Caim as a free-roaming, swashbuckling warrior on the battlefield in melee mode.

Although the action here is repetitive, with only basic skills required to cut a swathe through The Empire's demonic ranks, it embellishes Caim's kick-ass persona, making him

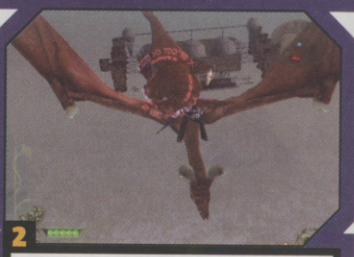
There's hardly any exploration required, but the few chances you get can deliver rewards such as new weapons

FIRE IN THE SKY

Our favourite sections of the game are those inspired by Panzer Dragoon.

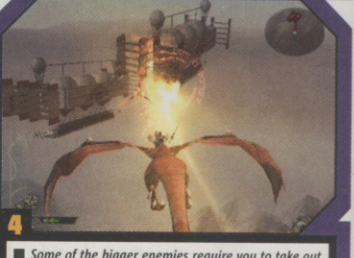
Okay, so your melding and relationship with the dragon are ripped from the Connery movie Dragonheart. But he's great to control, weaving through enemy fire or barrel-rolling to evade sudden attacks. All the enemies are imaginatively designed too, but the larger ones are amazing.

1 ■ Airborne enemies are more fantastical than ground troops. These boxes bounce lasers between them



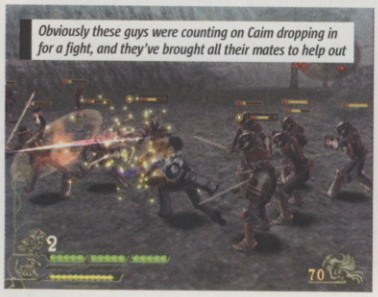
2 ■ You've more freedom in Drakengard than in Panzer Dragoon. Fly away from the action to line up an attack

3 ■ The dragon's magic power increases with each defeated enemy. When you attack it's like bonfire night!



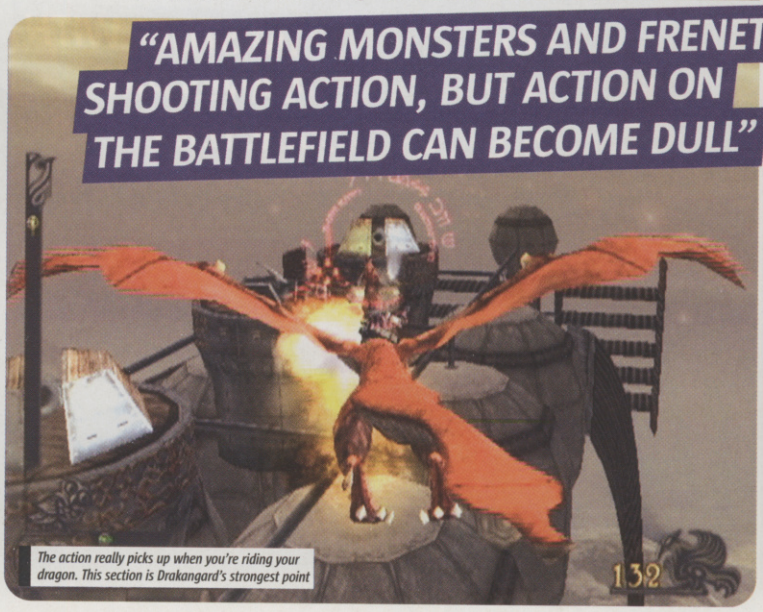
4 ■ Some of the bigger enemies require you to take out multiple targets before they collapse in flames

These guys are immune to dragon fire, wearing magical red armour. Only way to kill 'em is to jump in and slash 'em up!



Obviously these guys were counting on Caim dropping in for a fight, and they've brought all their mates to help out

"AMAZING MONSTERS AND FRENETIC SHOOTING ACTION, BUT ACTION ON THE BATTLEFIELD CAN BECOME DULL"



The action really picks up when you're riding your dragon. This section is Drakangard's strongest point

■ In Melee mode, Caim stands alone against hundreds of The Empire's ground forces, and must link together as many hits as possible. As the number of hits increases, the magic power of Caim's weapon rises, to be unleashed when he most needs it.

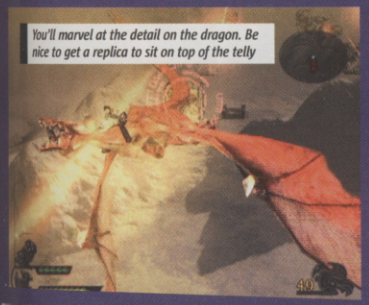
ONE MAN ARMY

Link combos together to give Caim EXP, used to increase his attack power and summon magic

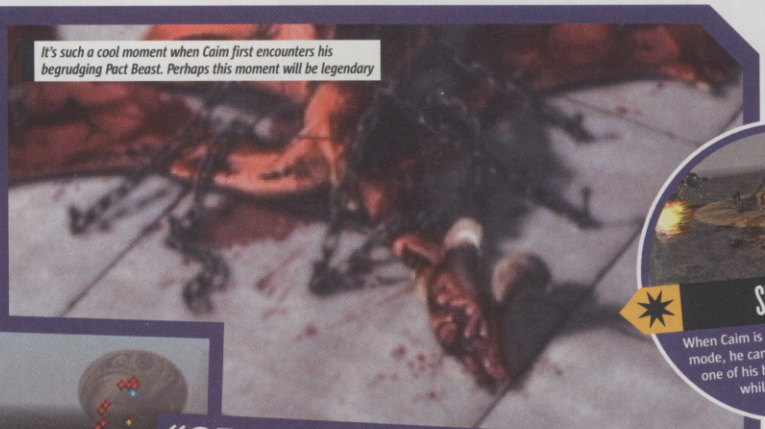
Priests can strike from a distance, so use jinking runs to dodge their magic

Magic attacks can be stored for smaller stun attacks, or built up for more powerful results

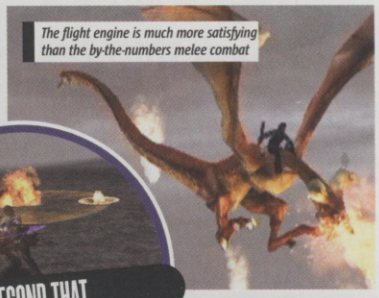
Check out its great magical properties, even though the weapon itself is r-u-b-b-i-s-h



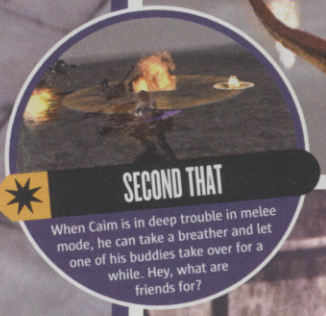
You'll marvel at the detail on the dragon. Be nice to get a replica to sit on top of the telly



It's such a cool moment when Caim first encounters his begrudging Pact Beast. Perhaps this moment will be legendary

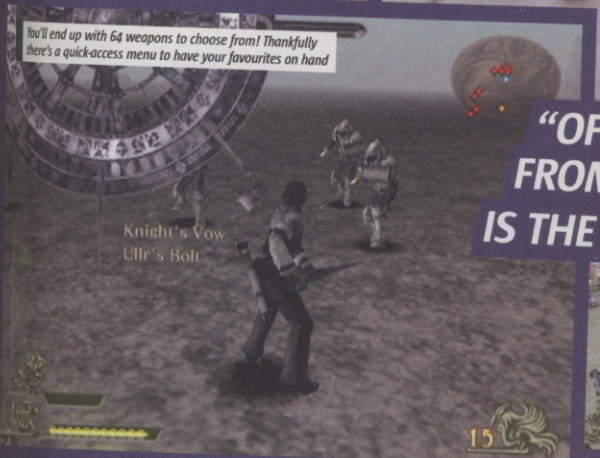


The flight engine is much more satisfying than the by-the-numbers melee combat



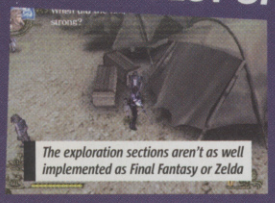
SECOND THAT

When Caim is in deep trouble in melee mode, he can take a breather and let one of his buddies take over for a while. Hey, what are friends for?



You'll end up with 64 weapons to choose from! Thankfully there's a quick-access menu to have your favourites on hand

"OF ALL THE FANTASTICAL BEASTS FROM SQUARE-ENIX, DRAKENGARD IS THE STRANGEST SPECIMEN YET"



The exploration sections aren't as well implemented as Final Fantasy or Zelda

Frying enemies with scorching hot dragon breath is great fun. FRY!

Tense moments add a dramatic edge to the whole experience

CVG 2ND OPINION

GRAEME

It's a funny one, this. Is it an RPG? Is it a third-person slash 'em up? Is it a fly-and-fry Panzer Dragoon rip-off? It's definitely not all three. While the separate parts are entertaining they just don't fit together, resulting in a weird mish-mash of game styles. It's still hugely interesting, especially for Square fans, but it's a high concept idea that's hasn't quite come off.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Ridge Racer, Alpine Racer, Mr Driller

HARD FACTS
- 64 types of weapon
- Three dragon evolutions
- Five different endings

DID YOU KNOW?
- If you were born in 1988, you are a Dragon according to Chinese mythology. The next year of the dragon is 2012.

more than just another anonymous dragon rider.

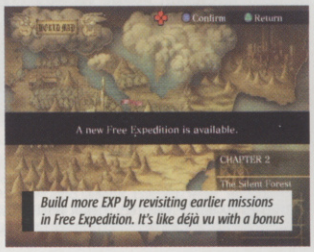
CAIM IS ABLE

Caim is also intriguing from an RPG perspective. His situation is complex: a warrior fighting The Empire on behalf of The Union, with his sister Furiae the goddess at the centre of all the unrest. Caim is quite the diamond in the rough, destined to rule the land as royalty at his sister's side. The Empire murdered their parents when they were kids, and captured Furiae to channel her powers for the purposes of evil. Supporting roles include men torn between loyalty to the goddess or The Empire, Furiae's doting suitors, and reluctant accomplices to Caim in battle. Their stories are mostly presented as extremely high quality CG cut-scenes, however their roles are enhanced by inclusion as allies in melee mode.

Inuart likes to do a bit of singing now and again. Magic

Of all the fantastical beasts Square-Enix has put its name to through the years, Drakengard is the strangest specimen yet. Love it or hate it, this is a genuine attempt to shake the comfortable routines expected from most large-production RPGs, while at the same time giving action fans fat reasons to care for their heroes.

Drakengard succeeds in ways bigger than it sets out to achieve, but weirdly fails in areas that you'd think were obvious. It soars one moment, and sucks the next. It never settles in between, if only because it's so damn awkward. It's like a gawky kid unable to prove his point, yet there's wisdom in it too. We can't help liking it, and it's certainly covering fresh territory. Even though it's nowhere near perfect, Drakengard hints at greater things to come should Square-Enix ever produce a sequel. ✷



Build more EXP by revisiting earlier missions in Free Expedition. It's like déjà vu with a bonus

CVG VERDICT

PAUL

GRAPHICS — 83
All scenes involving the dragon are hot, and the CG deserves a special mention too

SOUND — 80
Effects used in the battles are thunderous and fantastical. Music gets irritating, though

GAMEPLAY — 78
Primarily a dragon-riding adventure with melee fighting and RPG elements attached

LASTING APPEAL — 77
With five different endings to try for, you've just about enough reason keep on flying

The melee section's weak visuals and stunted gameplay undermine the potential of this otherwise radical take on the fantasy adventure.

OVERALL SCORE 81

HOW IT COMPARES
- PANZER DRAGOON ORTA
- DRAKENGARD
- SAMURAI WARRIORS

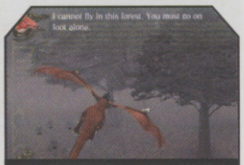
LOITERING WITH INTENT

Strafe mode gives you freedom to switch between struggling on foot, or using the might of the dragon to deal with ground troops.

However EXP can only be gained during direct combat, so enlisting the dragon's help should be used sparingly. Also some troops wear armour that is impervious to dragon breath, so sword against sword is the only option.

■ Take to the air, and decimate the Empire's troops using dragon fire. They don't stand a chance... usually

■ If the dragon takes too many hits, Caim is dropped into the the action so the dragon can recover



■ What, you can't get through trees, dragon dude? Surely you can just burn them down or something...

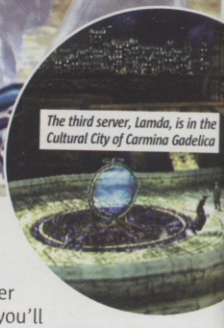
RELEASE DATE
18 JUNE

GAME INFO
COST: £39.99
PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
PUB: ATARI
DEV: BANDAI
HTTP://WWW.DOTHACK.COM
CONTACT: 0161 827 8060

.HACK MUTATION

Jack back into the second instalment in this epic fake online saga


The third server, Lamda, is in the Cultural City of Carmina Gadelica

DIRTY DEEDS

Although the .hack phenomenon is intended to be a safe, sanitised version of the occasionally murky online RPG world, it actually deals with some controversial topics.

Kite is only able to delve deeper into the ongoing mystery by performing all sorts of illegal online actions, such as hacking into prohibited areas and data-draining monsters.

1 ■ Kite is on his way to becoming a hardened cyber-terrorist. All for the good of mankind, of course

2 ■ Gate Hacking to access Protected Areas is strictly forbidden, but it's the only way to get to the truth

3 ■ Data Drain is another illegal activity. Use it to rewrite monster code after first lowering their protective shield

The basic premise of the entire .hack mythology is that those killjoys who say that gaming rots your brain just might be right.

Based around a fictional online role-playing game called The World, the four instalments in the .hack saga (not to mention the accompanying anime DVDs, TV series and comic books) stretch the thin line between truth and fiction.

In the first game we were introduced to the character of Kite, who is actually just a fictional character in The World, controlled by a 'real' (but not really!) person. Things get a little twisted when the 'real world' players controlling the characters that Kite meets online start disappearing under strange circumstances. At the end of the first game we see the mystery only just starting to unravel, which is exactly where .hack Mutation picks up the thread.

PREVIOUS GAMES
■ .hack Infection, Digimon World 2003, Akira Psychoball

HARD FACTS
■ In order to enter a Grunty in the Flag Race, you must first raise a Grunty in all three hub towns
■ There are over 150,000 levels available to access on the Lamda server using random key words
■ To get all the available Ryu books you must use Data Drain 80 times

DID YOU KNOW?
■ Although the events in The World are entirely fictional, a gamer in South Korea recently collapsed and died after playing online for 86 hours non-stop.

It could be our imagination, but it seems that the enemies in Mutation are more interesting than in the first game

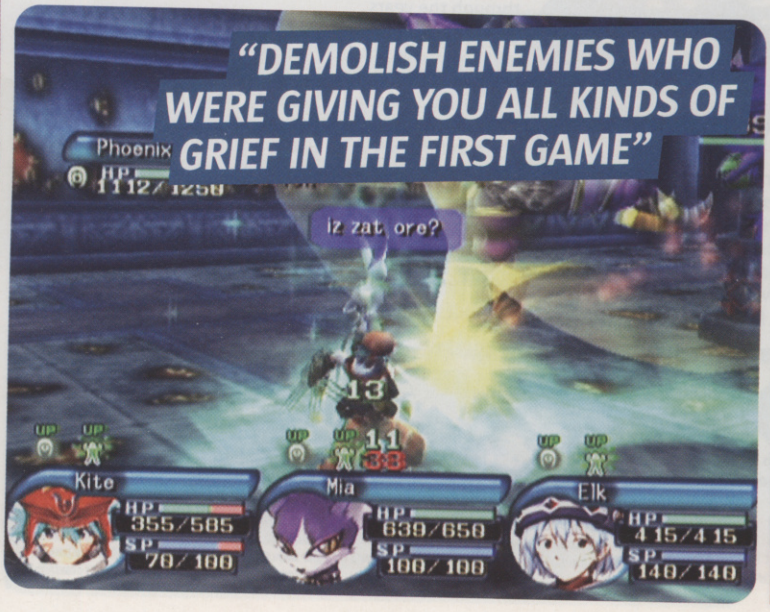
MUTANT X

Although it's not essential to have played .hack Infection before playing Mutation, the lack of tutorials or any sort of explanation of the previous storyline will make it more than a little bit confusing for newcomers.

Those who have already battled their way through the first game will be delighted to know that they can upload their character stats and previously saved items. If you didn't manage to finish the first game you get to start with a default set of stats. This is not as bad as it sounds, as this time around Kite and his friends actually seem a lot stronger than before, and you'll take great pleasure in instantly demolishing enemies who were giving you all kinds of grief in the first game.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

The basic gameplay is identical to the first instalment. Battle your way through dungeons to uncover more secrets about your missing friends. In typical RPG fashion you level up by defeating monsters and can equip different weapons and items in order to access different magic 'skills'. The dungeons are huge, occasionally very difficult to complete, and sometimes repetitive, but the intriguing nature of the plot and the banter between the characters keeps you ploughing on. For those without an internet connection this is the closest thing you'll find to an online RPG minus any of the hassle. ✷



CVG VERDICT

MAURA

GRAPHICS — P6
The lush cut-scenes and imaginative characters live up to the standards of the first instalment

SOUND — P0
The music gets a little annoying after a bit, but the voice acting is quality

GAMEPLAY — P2
As with .hack Part 1, there are plenty of intense battles, but they can get repetitive

LASTING APPEAL — P5
A huge game, with seemingly endless dungeons makes for superb value

If you loved the first instalment you won't be disappointed. More secrets are revealed, and the dungeons and battles seem even more challenging.

OVERALL SCORE 76

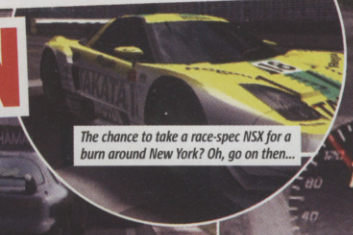
HOW IT COMPARES
FINAL FANTASY X-2
.HACK PART 2
.HACK PART 1

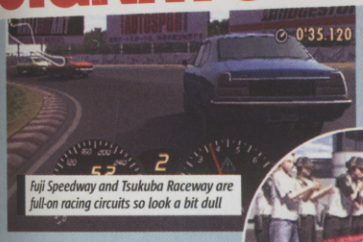
GRAN TURISMO PROLOGUE

An expensive test-drive of the hottest driving game ever

SIGNATURE EDITION

The bumper cam is still the way to drive, especially if you've got Logitech's ace GT Force wheel


The chance to take a race-spec NSX for a burn around New York? Oh, go on then...


Fuji Speedway and Tsukuba Raceway are full-on racing circuits so look a bit dull

Computer drivers still stick doggedly to the racing line like they're on rails. We hope the AI gets tweaked

Here's some maths you may actually want to do. GT4 Prologue is a cutdown version of the full game, which isn't out until the end of the year. It has five tracks, 61 cars, a bonus DVD with neat personal message from GT inventor Kazanori Yamauchi, and not a sniff of GT4's online mode. The full version should have over 500 cars and 100 tracks, so you're getting about 10% of the full game.

Right, let's see... you're paying £24.99, 60% of the price of a full game, for 10% of that game's content. Which, on paper, is about as value-packed a buy as a rusty 1989 Nissan Sunny with a wheel missing and bloodstains on the bonnet.

FUEL IT UP

But that's not really the point. Lamborghinis are really expensive, but at the end of the day they get you down the shops just as well as a Micra. The extra money goes on the pleasure you get from driving an amazing automotive work of art. And all the girls you'll pull.

And make no mistake, GT4 Prologue contains the purest driving experience on any console – it's steak to Burnout and NFS: Underground's burgers. Still, if you'd rather chow down on some arcade racing it's not for you, and the refinements visible in Prologue suggest that GT4 won't do anything to change your appetite.

The fundamental experience is the same: perfect. It actually feels like an add-on for GT3 at this stage, but what an add-on. GT3's visuals are still rarely bettered on PS2, and GT4's graphics stink of quality like a fart in a Ferrari.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Gran Turismo
- Gran Turismo 2
- Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec

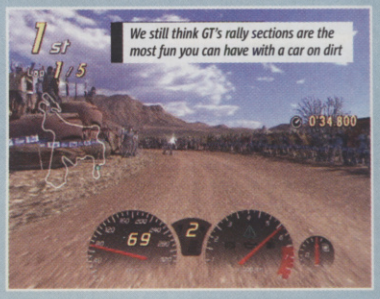
HARD FACTS
- Number of cars: 64
- Number of tracks: 3
- Number of license tests: 41

DID YOU KNOW?
- The developers trawled the world to model, record and personally test-drive every single car in the game. Nice work if you can get it.

FUEL IT UP

The flat tyre on all this is the fact that the only real play you'll get out of GT4 Prologue is 41 licence tests that start out patronising and end up crazily frustrating, then razzing the cars you've unlocked on the five fantastic tracks. Even if you're a hardcore GT fan the fuel tank empties really quickly.

This is a very limited test-drive of the monster that GT4 will be, and as long as that's all you're expecting you won't be disappointed. You might only be getting 10% of the full game but, for a wee while, it's still 100% petrolhead heaven. ✷


We still think GT's rally sections are the most fun you can have with a car on dirt

We love the Citte Di Aria course – narrow streets and tight turns mean messy pants

Times Square looks fantastic, especially when you're screaming through it in a Mitsu Lancer

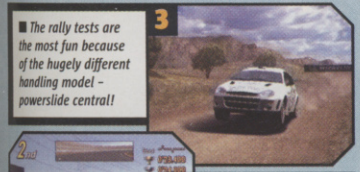
DRIVING TEST

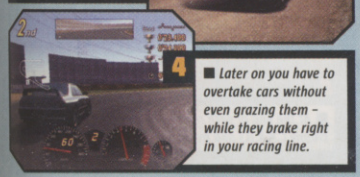
Your driving test is probably the crappest, most intense, most pant-messing hour you'll ever spend in your life, so making a game out of it probably isn't a good idea.

Admittedly, you get to drive Dodge Vipers rather than your instructor's clapped-out Peugeot, but we reckon a progressive arcade racing mode would have been better than Prologue's patronising lessons.

Learning how to steer: aka a big bunch of arse. We reckon we can manage on our own, thanks

Driving through cones is a bit more fun, but one mistake and you have to do it again which is dead annoying


The rally tests are the most fun because of the hugely different handling model – powerslide central!


Later on you have to overtake cars without even grazing them – while they brake right in your racing line.

The visuals are so good we wonder why other PS2 games don't look as amazing

"GT3'S VISUALS ARE STILL RARELY BETTERED ON PS2, GT4'S STINK OF QUALITY LIKE A FART IN A FERRARI"

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 96
Absolutely untouched on PS2 and manages to put some Xbox games to shame

SOUND 79
Engine notes rock but only one new tune and no in-game music

GAMEPLAY 74
Phenomenal driving fun, but you're hugely restricted by the lack of scope

LASTING APPEAL 44
This is Prologue's problem: you don't get enough miles to the gallon for your £25

It's just a demo, and an expensive one at that, but it does let you get behind the wheel of a pre-production model and it's sweet while it lasts.

OVERALL SCORE 73

HOW IT COMPARES
- GRAN TURISMO 3
- GRAN TURISMO 4 PROLOGUE
- NFS: UNDERGROUND

RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO	ONLINE GAMING	EXTRAS
25 JUNE	COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-4	* PUB: SEGA * DEV: SONIC TEAM * HTTP://WWW.SEGA.COM/GAMES/ * CONTACT: 08456 090090	* TEAMS OF UP TO EIGHT BATTLING IN TWO-ON-TWO TOURNAMENT COMBAT	* BROADBAND ADAPTOR * MODEM ADAPTOR

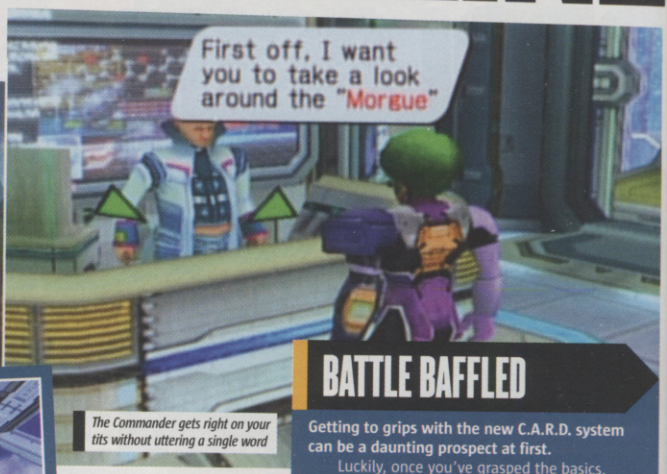
PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

EPISODE III: C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION

All hands on decks as Sonic Team's online actioner goes card crazy

This is about as visually stimulating as the whole thing gets – at least you won't go blind

The laydeez sport magnificent armaments – careful love, you'll have someone's eye out



The Commander gets right on your tits without uttering a single word

Of Bungee suddenly unleashed Halo 3 and replaced the adrenaline-soaked, gun-crazy bloodlust with a fully-fledged bakery simulation, sticking its hero in a pinny and majestic blue-rinse wig for good measure, fanboys would be hitting their Hotmail accounts in droves. So swapping the real-time fighting frolics of Phantasy Star Online for turn-based card combat was a brave move for Sonic Team. Question is, did it work?

PSO3 picks up the storyline where the last game signed off – you're still stranded in space, orbiting the desolate, uninhabitable planet of Ragor II. This time though, there's a dangerous terrorist faction up to no good down below.

SAME SPOTS, NEW LEOPARD

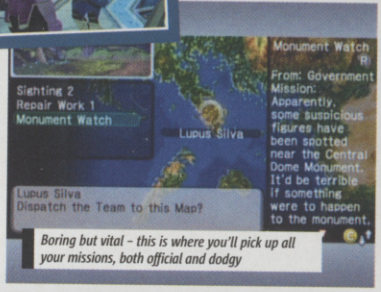
Whack in the disc, gawping at the eerily familiar graphics and soundtrack, and you'd be forgiven for thinking your friendly software retailer's slipped you last year's title by mistake. Fire up the Mission Select terminal and beam yourself down to the surface, however, and PSO3's brave new world becomes instantly apparent. Instead of the familiar free-roaming hack 'n' slash dungeon-crawler we know and love, you'll be plonked on a combat grid, given a deck of cards and told to get on with it.

MINIATURE MUNITIONS

You see, the boffins of the future have found a way to shrink all your artillery down on to tiny C.A.R.D.s and it's these you'll be whipping out during battle. Starting with the default deck, your initial hand consists of Character, Item or Creature (depending whether you play as the Hero Side or Dark Side, respectively), Action and Assist cards. These determine who'll play in battle, what weaponry they have at their disposal, their methods of attack and if special rules are applied to a match.

Battle itself is split into five separate stages – Dice, Set, Move, Action and Draw. Firstly, a roll of the dice will determine your Attack and Defence points for the round. Attack points diminish as you equip your weapons in Set mode and cross the grid in the Move phase – you'll need to think strategically to maximise your cards while ensuring you save enough points to lay on a couple of hard-hitting blows during Action. Finally, you'll have the chance to conjure up some protection against your opponent's inevitable blitz before replenishing your hand.

Whether you're working through single-player Story mode, offline two- to four-player Free Battle mode or Online Tournament mode, the basic gameplay



Boring but vital – this is where you'll pick up all your missions, both official and dodgy

BATTLE BAFFLED

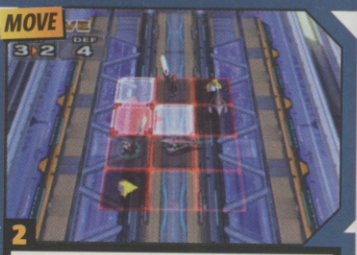
Getting to grips with the new C.A.R.D. system can be a daunting prospect at first.

Luckily, once you've grasped the basics, you'll be shuffling with more vigour and panache than the annual Magic Circle convention.

SET

1 ■ Use the Set phase to whip out your artillery and any defensive abilities you might want to strap on

MOVE



2 ■ Once you're equipped for combat, pilfer some of your points to make your way across the board

ATTACK

3 ■ All remaining points can be used to lay on a torrent of destruction once you've reached your opponent

DRAW

4 ■ At the end of each round, you can discard any crappy C.A.R.D.s and freshen up your deck

As you progress, the playing field grows bigger and far more perilous. Yipe!

It's all very old-skool with HPs, ATs and MVs flying about the place. Think you're tough enough?

"THE WHOLE PROCESS IS UTTERLY BAFFLING AT FIRST, WITH C.A.R.D.S, STATS AND EXPLOSIONS ZIPPING AROUND THE SCREEN"

FIVE KNUCKLE SHUFFLE

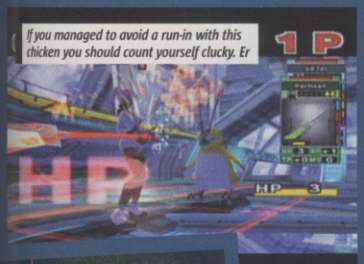
The key to successful card combat is optimising your deck to suit the skills of your respective team members. Whenever you return from battle with a fresh hand of items, you should immediately hit the C.A.R.D. Room to tailor your new deck.

Viviana brags about her close-range skills but lacks her own deck to plunge into battle with

Rectify the situation by heading to the C.A.R.D. Room to create her own personalised hand

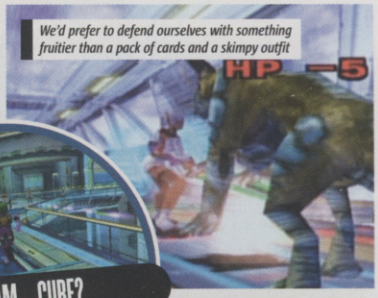
Study the strengths and weaknesses of your C.A.R.D.s before dishing them out

Once you've fashioned the perfect hand for Viviana, prepare to do battle...



If you managed to avoid a run-in with this chicken you should count yourself clucky. Er

If you're feeling a bit naughty, you can join the terrorist group ARKZ for some frivolous wrong-doing



We'd prefer to defend ourselves with something fruitier than a pack of cards and a skimpy outfit

DREAM... CUBE?

Sonic Team still hasn't used Cube's full graphical potential to bring Ragol II to life – it looks almost identical to the old Dreamcast original.

For some unknown reason, this man has yellow nipples on his armour

The ARKZ summon creatures instead of wielding weapons – like this bollock-munching shrubbery

You'll start your missions in the Morgue or R-base, depending on your side

Pay close attention to the board to plan your moves effectively

Ogle her bristols one more time and you'll be walking like you've crapped your pants for a week

PREVIOUS GAMES

PSO Episode I & II, Sonic Heroes, Billy Hatcher And The Giant Egg, Puyo Pop Fever

HARD FACTS

- Two different sides to align yourself with in Story mode – follow different plotlines and master combat using either weapons or creatures
- Over 400 cards to collect in Story mode and then trade online

DID YOU KNOW?

Founded in 1988, it wasn't until the conception of its blue hero in 1991 that Sonic Team actually became Sonic Team. Before that, the developers used the catchy moniker Sega Consumer Department #3, aka AM8.

mechanics remain the same – select your team, refine your deck and head into combat. It's this simplistic formula that ultimately proves to be PSO3's biggest blessing and heaviest curse.

SOLO SALVATION

The new emphasis on strategy-intense combat makes for a far more fulfilling single-player game – especially now that your conquests are book-ended by some beautifully evocative animé-style cut-scenes and rewarded with meatier munitions and rarer cards. At last, the series has an offline mode that won't bore the solo adventurer to tears.

Once Viv's got a firm grip on the shaft, she'll work the staff to the explosive climax

On the other hand, and perhaps more significantly, the fragmented arena battles strip much of the community spirit and camaraderie from the multiplayer experience. There's no longer the sense that you're part of a merry band of adventurers traversing distant lands in a united goal and, although you're free to trade your cards at will, there's nothing to match the feverishly addictive weapons and item bartering seen in previous episodes.

Gameplay-wise, you and your mates can form teams of up to eight players to battle it out in two-on-two Free Battle tournaments, but that's your lot.

DOUBLE-EDGED DECK

Ultimately, what you make of PSO3's new direction depends wholly on how the new C.A.R.D. mechanics grab you. It's a smart, deep and rewarding system that pays off the further in you get but, for most people, it's likely to prove far too slow and monotonous to want to bother with in the long-term – especially when compared to the blistering arcade action of earlier games.

Wisely, Sega's opted to cover all PSO games under one Hunter's Licence so you won't have to splash out more monthly cash to play the new episode online. Anyone looking for a deeper fighting system and fresh twist on the franchise will welcome this news, but for everyone else, Episode III is probably a little too much of a revolution for its own good. ✷

CVG 2ND OPINION

GRAEME

We were a bit sceptical when the new card-fighting mechanics were announced. Thankfully, it's as slickly implemented as we could hope for and adds some real meat to the skeletal single-player game of old. It's nice to see developers taking risks with established franchises, but this is just too slow and convoluted to match the manic thrills of Episode I and II's online play.

CVG VERDICT

MATT

GRAPHICS 73

Gorgeous animé cut-scenes but it still looks like the Dreamcast original

SOUND 76

Music swings from sublime to infuriating but sound effects are unremarkable throughout

GAMEPLAY 81

C.A.R.D. play is deep, intelligent and rewarding but it's definitely not for everyone

LASTING APPEAL 79

If you dig the C.A.R.D. mechanics it's a lengthy game online and offline, but if not...

OVERALL SCORE 78

Engaging in single-player, but loses some of its team-based attraction online. The combat system is pretty meaty but it still might prove too niche for most

HOW IT COMPARES

PSO: EPISODES I & II
PSO EPISODE III
LOST KINGDOMS II

HOLIDAY ON RAGOR

With the exploration and free-roaming real-time battle elements now consigned to history, the biggest incentive to keep playing is the myriad of battle locations that you'll slowly uncover as you work your way through Story mode.

Best of all, once you've thrashed your way to victory on a map, the locations become available for multiplayer stand-offs in Free Battle mode.

The ladies endlessly ride up and down this mighty erection with no final destination in sight

With all the pollen floating around this breezy glen, you'll fell enemies on sneeze-power alone

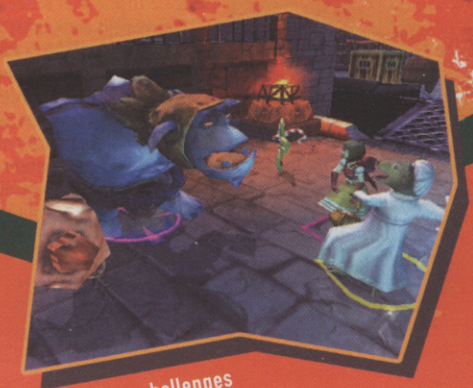
The beach is the perfect location to relax and unwind – if you don't mind the mutant dog up your arse

SHREK 2™

THE ADVENTURE CONTINUES.

OWN THE GAME NOW.

Explore tonnes of twisted journeys— from the movie and beyond.



Tackle crazy challenges playing as a team of 4.

Switch between favourite characters to utilise their unique powers.

DREAMWORKS

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Test your skills in cool mini-quests created for each character.

Experience way-out adventures with 3 of your friends in multiplayer mode.

shrek2thegame.co.uk

PlayStation.2 XBOX GAME BOY ADVANCE NINTENDO GAMECUBE ACTIVISION

activision.com

RELEASE DATE: 4 JUNE

GAME INFO: COST: £29.99 PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO: PUB: NINTENDO DEV: NINTENDO WWW.NINTENDO.COM CONTACT: 01932 895390

This is Ryo, star of the cartoon show. He's pretty cool but less so outside of Japan

F-ZERO GP LEGEND

As much eye-blistering F-Zero action as you can handle

RYU WHO?

Story Mode is pretty long-winded due to it being an extension of a TV series aired in Japan. It's still cool, and you'll really get to know the characters.

Mess up the shortcut and you could wind up bouncing around like a superball

Unless you live in Japan, the fact that this second F-Zero for GBA features characters from a TV show is irrelevant.

Apart from that, a guy called Ryu has stepped in for Captain Falcon as the hero for Story Mode, but more on that later. What is important is that we have a totally revamped, extremely challenging update of a classic, with Nintendo really going to town on the presentation and depth of gameplay this time.

While there haven't been improvements to the nuts-and-bolts visuals for the races in GP Legend, it benefits hugely from a Story Mode that incorporates the types of challenges that made F-Zero GX so enjoyable. On a related note, you'll discover that every circuit is laden with plentiful shortcut opportunities that you're forced to consider given the punishing nature of circuit layouts. That, and you're now up against 30 other opponents in Grand Prix mode. GP Legend comes out growling straight from the garage!

With new hero Ryu on the scene, we hope it isn't the end for our old fave Falcion

TURNING POINT

The biggest improvement is the tuning option. Similar to F-Zero GX, drivers balance their ship's performance before every challenge or race, within the vehicle's basic parameters. Another neat addition is the ability to play through other characters' stories after meeting them for the first time, which doubles up as the way to unlock other ships for the Grand Prix and multiplayer races. Initially, Story Mode can only be played as Ryu, but it's cool how each new character helps you branch out to find out more of the plot while appreciating how to drive the contrasting styles of vehicle.

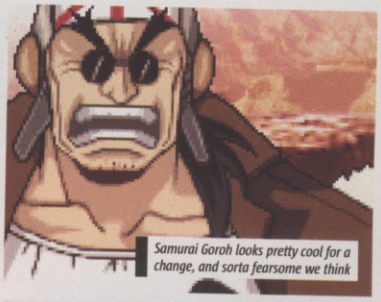
You could almost accuse GP Legend of being heavy-handed with its insistence on a driver's skill. The whole package is geared up to make a driver out of you – a basic level of competence is not only required, it is even acknowledged by an unlockable licence test, pushing even F-Zero pros to the edge of endurance! Yet, although it looks not much more than a tarted-up SNES game, the racing experience is second to none on GBA. ✷

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Mario Kart: Super Circuit, F-Zero: Maximum Velocity, Super Mario World

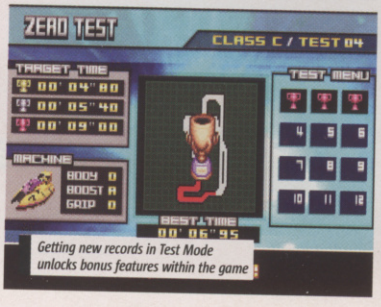
HARD FACTS
- 48 challenges
- 40 hover-tastic missions
- Three gameplay modes

DID YOU KNOW?
- Jackie Chan broke his foot on a hovercraft while filming the movie Rumble In The Bronx. Ouch!

Falcon presents his guide to the universe. In other words please select a racecourse



Samurai Goroh looks pretty cool for a change, and sorta fearsome we think



Getting new records in Test Mode unlocks bonus features within the game

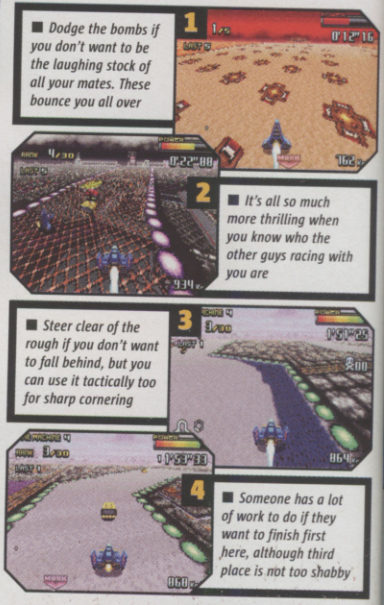
Yoinks! Looks like this scruffy dude is about to nick off with your car stereo

CVG GOLD AWARD

MULTIPLAYER MPH

As with F-Zero: Maximum Velocity, you only need one copy of GP Legend to race with up to three other friends, to see who has the sharpest reflexes.

Of course, more tracks and ships are available if everyone has the game, but if you're happy to keep it basic, GBAs and cables are all you need. It's better to have all the ships and courses you've unlocked to really prove who's king.



■ Dodge the bombs if you don't want to be the laughing stock of all your mates. These bounce you all over

■ It's all so much more thrilling when you know who the other guys racing with you are

■ Steer clear of the rough if you don't want to fall behind, but you can use it tactically too for sharp cornering

■ Someone has a lot of work to do if they want to finish first here, although third place is not too shabby

CVG VERDICT

PAUL

GRAPHICS 88
Tracks are flatter than a pancake, but it's all crystal clear and the moves are super-slick

SOUND 87
You'll be hearing the terrific high-pitched wail of the airbrakes as you fall asleep

GAMEPLAY 93
Flat out built for speed! You'll need to be on top of your game with your reflexes

LASTING APPEAL 90
With Story Mode and multiplayer racing, you'll be hooked till the next F-Zero's out

It might look old-skool from the screenshots, but GP Legend totally flies. Races are so tight this is guaranteed to get your heart pumping.

OVERALL SCORE 91

HOW IT COMPARES
- F-ZERO: MAX VELOCITY
- F-ZERO: GP LEGEND
- SEGA RALLY

RELEASE DATE 11 JUNE

GAME INFO COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: CODEMASTERS
- DEV: CODEMASTERS
- WWW.CODEMASTERS.CO.UK/MTVMG3
- CONTACT: 01926 816044

PS2 XBOX

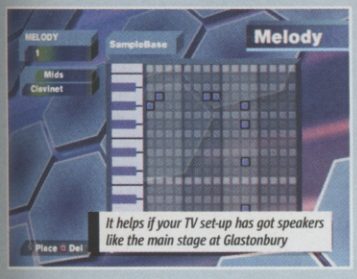
MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3 THIS IS THE REMIX

Bustin' block-rocking beats from your console

CVG GOLD AWARD

The soundwave of each individual sample can be fiddled around with

Xbox is better suited to this than PS2 as you can properly rip your CDs



It helps if your TV set-up has got speakers like the main stage at Glastonbury

You can muck around with your masterpiece while it's actually playing

PROPER BO'

You can change the bass lines and the drum beats, as well as messing about on the track with cool stuff like distortion, reverb and delay.

Reckon you can produce beats better than The Neptunes? Think you've got the remixing wizardry to be the next Timberlake? MTV Music Generator's back to let you try, this time with an amazingly simple new interface.

First up, this is not a game. It's a music sequencing and remixing program. Either you can jiggle about with the ten pre-loaded songs (from the likes of Outkast, Snoop Dogg and Sean Paul), or you can start your own tracks from scratch. The slick interface keeps things accessible, making it well easy to get started.

For the first time in the series you can rip up to 20 eight-second clips from any CD, giving you massive potential to break both musical boundaries – and copyright laws. This feature works better on Xbox, as PS2's lack of a hard drive means you have to resample every time you turn the game on.

To really do MTV's features justice would take either a grand's worth of pro music kit or a top-notch PC with some expensive software. Or maybe both. It's not perfect, as if you want to burn your choons to CD or MP3 you have to connect your console to a PC first. But even so, it can only be a matter of time before the first number one single created on a console goes top of the pops – MTV is that good. ✷

STEVE O

CVG VERDICT

If you want to try your hand at dance or hip-hop remixing or even writing, there's never been such a good way to start. Unique, but don't expect a game.

OVERALL SCORE 88

HOW IT COMPARES
- SINGSTAR
- MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3
- KARAOKE STAGE

RELEASE DATE 25 JUNE

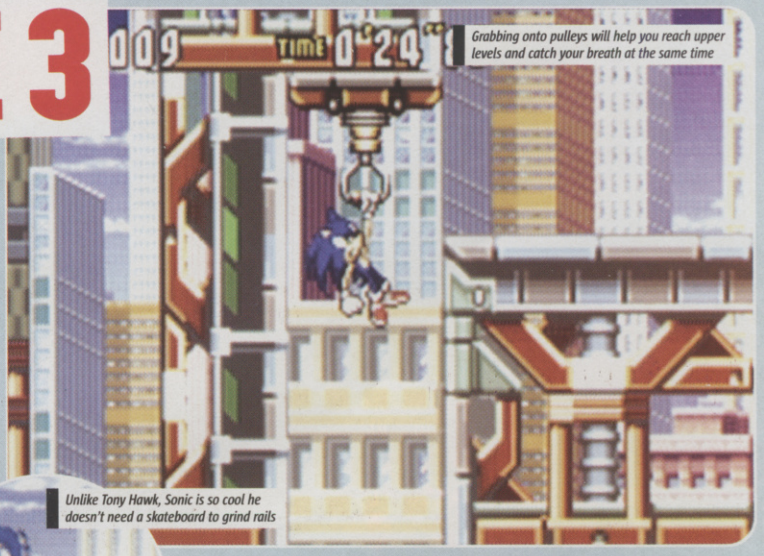
GAME INFO COST: £29.99 PLAYERS: 1-4

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: THQ
- DEV: SEGA
- WWW.THQ.CO.UK
- 09067 535055

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SONIC ADVANCE 3

The original Lord of the Rings is back



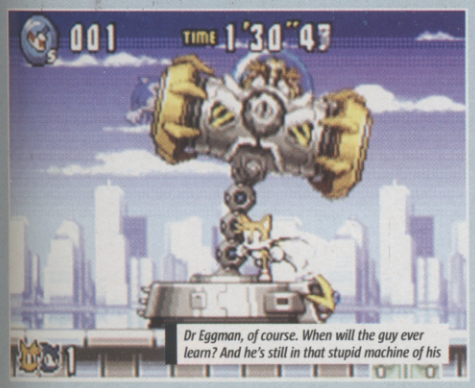
Grabbing onto pulleys will help you reach upper levels and catch your breath at the same time

Swearing. It's big, clever and fun, and there's no-one quite like that loveable little hedgehog for turning the air bluer than his spiky coat.

During every Sonic game there's always that special moment when you launch your ring-laden self slap-bang onto a hidden spike and watch your golden treasures scattering across the screen. Like Golem, only madder, you feverishly attempt to grab them all back, but it's too late. So you go back and do the same thing all over again. And you swear a lot. That's the timeless magic of Sonic.

Dr Eggman is up to his old tricks again, dividing the world into seven parts that Sonic and pals must reunite. Sonic Advance 3 is everything you've come to expect from a Sonic game. Dashing at breakneck speed through colourful levels, collecting rings and Chaos, unlocking some new characters and generally acting cute. The major new aspect of the game worth noting is the new partner system, where you get to choose either Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, Cream or Amy to act as your buddy. In multiplayer co-op mode you can play alongside a mate and snigger as they lose all their rings as well. ✷

Unlike Tony Hawk, Sonic is so cool he doesn't need a skateboard to grind rails



Dr Eggman, of course. When will the guy ever learn? And he's still in that stupid machine of his

Three tantalisingly placed golden rings. But look out for the fiendish spikes directly below

Team up with a partner and they can help you reach secret places with their special moves

MAURA

CVG VERDICT

It's Sonic business as usual, with few surprises. We still love the little guy and the game looks gorgeous, but maybe it's time for the old dog to try some new tricks.

OVERALL SCORE 68

HOW IT COMPARES
- SONIC BATTLE
- SONIC ADVANCE 3
- SONIC PINBALL PARTY

KONAMI

Destiny has chosen YOU to duel again.

The official game for the Yu-Gi-Oh!
World Championship 2004.

The Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship 2004
will be held in Los Angeles this summer.
Discover how you can be part of it. Check out
www.konami-europe.com/wct2004

GAME BOY ADVANCE

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LICENSED BY
Nintendo

Getting to know your way round Perimeter's controls can take a while

Some land can't be terraformed, like the ridges separating these cells

Nothing gets through that energy shield – though they can get under it...

Energy beams link all your towers back to the Frame, or mothership

PERIMETER

We've seen the future, and it's Angel Delight flavoured

Some of the alien worlds are very, well, alien. It's nice to see such original visual ideas

The detail in the unit structures as well as the lighting and shadow effects is awesome

On the future, mankind will protect itself with huge walls made from nuclear-proof jelly. Missiles, lasers, and alien suicide bombers will be unable to penetrate this barrier of indestructible Angel Delight.

How do we know? 'Cos we've been there, and you can come too in Perimeter, a real-time strategiser that dares to be different and anyone with a brain for tactics will go all wobbly for.

PREVIOUS GAMES
■ This is the first game of note by these Russian newbies. Neat debut!

HARD FACTS
■ The Perimeter game engine can render over one million polygons every second. Anyone who knows what that means, please write and explain to us at the usual address.

DID YOU KNOW?
■ Like Elm Street's Freddy, the aliens you fight are supposed to be generated by the dreams and fears of the humans that have invaded their galaxy.

MOULD BREAKER

Set in the far future, mankind have fled Earth to a newly discovered galaxy and is so technologically advanced they make us look like mere monkeys scratching our arses and touching our winkies. But as well as competing factions of humans to contend with, this galaxy is populated by a deadly alien race known as the Flood. Sorry, Scourge. Yadda, yadda, yadda...

But as soon as you actually get stuck in you'll notice why Perimeter stands out among the endless hordes of PC strategisers. No need here to set armies of workers out collecting energy – instead, you just have to flatten land and build energy towers. Nor do you build masses of units to send off to conquer your foes either – you command a maximum of five, but each one can consist of a battalion of little nano-bots with a massive variety of specialisations.

Hell, you don't even have to decide what kind of army to build – you can morph your robo troops Transformers-style into anything wherever and whenever you want – tanks, fighter craft, underground tunnelling attack ships!

LOS GALACTICOS

Both gameplay and graphics feel light-years ahead of the pack, from the awesome-looking jelly-like defence shield your base generates to the brilliantly thought out systems of terraforming, energy collection and unit morphing.

The downside is it can all be a little tricky to get your head round. Morphing your army at the flick of a switch can make battles feel a little disorganised, and the tactics for success seem a little random. On top of this, many battles degenerate into slow advances of defensive structures like missile towers and laser turrets.

Overall, though, this is an original and brave effort that sticks two fingers up at strategy convetions. Wannabe sci-fi generals will love immersing their heads in this strategy flavoured dessert. ✷

This shield effect looks class in a glass... of lime-flavoured Angel Delight

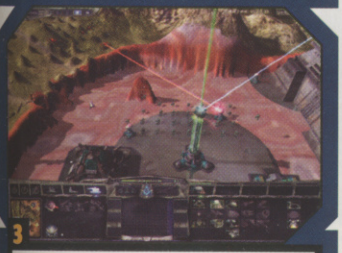
FLAT ATTACK

One of the best features about Perimeter is the terraforming system.

To construct buildings and collect energy to power your base you need to create flat land – a bit like that daddy of old-school strategisers, Populous. The system works beautifully since your clever builder units go ahead and flatten the best sites. Cheers!

1 ■ You mark out the terrain you want to flatten in green, and your nano-bots get to it

2 ■ Energy towers built on the flat land extract the power to run your base. But beware, as...



3 ■ ...flat land can become uneven through alien attacks, natural disasters and enemy assaults...

4 ■ ...And when this happens, your structures stop functioning and your energy network is disrupted

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 89
If you've got a PC with more power than a Roberto Carlos free-kick, it looks blinding

SOUND 87
Great music and top notch sci-fi FX make for some cracking space-age sounds

GAMEPLAY 85
Some blindingly original new ideas, but tricky to get your head round

LASTING APPEAL 79
Like many an RTS, it can get a little samey in the long run

Unusual, challenging, and slick looking with fresh ideas and top-notch presentation. Well worth a look if you're tired of the usual strategiser clones.

OVERALL SCORE 83

HOW IT COMPARES
GOBLIN COMMANDER
PERIMETER
GROUND CONTROL 2

RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO	EXTRAS
NOW	COST: £29.99 PLAYERS: 1-4	PUB: KONAMI DEV: KONAMI HTTP://WWW.KONAMI.COM/BOKTAI CONTACT: 09014 747484	GBA LINK CABLE

BOKTAI

THE SUN IS IN YOUR HAND

The world's first ever solar-powered videogame from the genius behind Metal Gear Solid

CVG SILVER AWARD

Otenko is your own personal ray of sunshine. He frequently pops up to give you good advice

There are several different exits to find in each level, so make sure you explore thoroughly

The puzzles that you have to solve usually involve pushing huge crates onto switches

POOLS OF RADIANCE

You don't just use the sun to power up your Solar Gun in Boktai. Playing the game in the sunshine has many other effects that will take some time to discover.

For instance, most of your enemies are much more powerful in the darkness, and some of them, especially bosses, can only be killed by exposure to direct sunlight.

1 ■ The stronger the sunlight when playing outside, the faster you can charge up your weapon

2 ■ Your enemies are much more vulnerable when you can see them in the open, but then so are you!

3 ■ Some ghouls are much stronger indoors, but if you lure them towards skylights you can kill them

4 ■ The Pile Driver move that finishes off each major boss can only be achieved with the help of sunlight

We've all been hearing it for years: "You spend too much time indoors playing games, why don't you get out in the sun and do something healthy for a change," blah, blah, bleat, bleat, whine, whine.

Well now, thanks to Metal Gear Solid genius Hideo Kojima, you can shut them all up by shoving Boktai so far up their asses it'll give 'em a cranial enema.

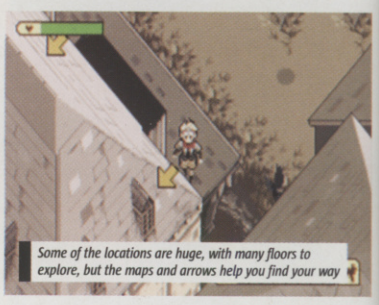
So what is Boktai? Some rare Japanese herb? An unusual venereal disease? Nope, it's actually a game that runs on sunlight.

Mad, eh? The man who encouraged us all to skulk around in boxes and hide in the shadows now wants us all to go and play in the sunshine. There's even a warning on the intro screen about staying too long in the hot sun! Whatever next, suncream endorsements from Solid Snake?

FACTOR 25

For such an innovative concept, Boktai's storyline sounds very familiar. It's the end of the world, yet again, and you play the part of Django, a young boy chosen to fight the hordes of the Undead and their fabulously named leader, the Count of Ground Soaking Blood. You run, hide, fire your gun and occasionally press the odd switch. It's nothing we haven't seen or done many, many times before. The same cannot be said for the amazing way in which the game harnesses the real-life natural energy of the sun's rays.

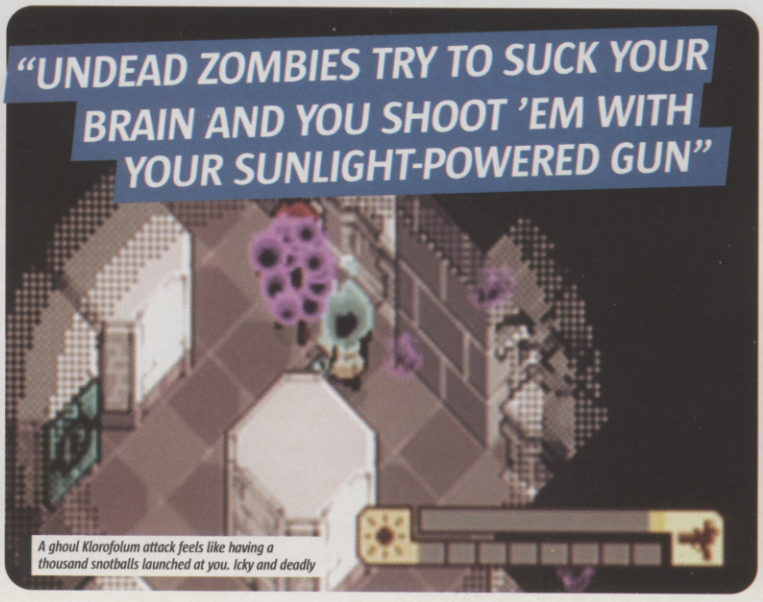
The secret of Boktai's plastic sundial effect lies in a sun-sensor chip embedded in the game pak. It's a cunning thing. Try to fool it by turning on the light and it refuses to budge. Clever bastard. And yet so small. Even holding it up next to the window doesn't work very well, unless you've got a giraffe neck and the sort of muscle control that makes the Karma Sutra irrelevant. Nope, there's nothing else for it, if you want to experience Boktai in all its golden splendour, you have to sit in the sun. Just don't forget your hat...



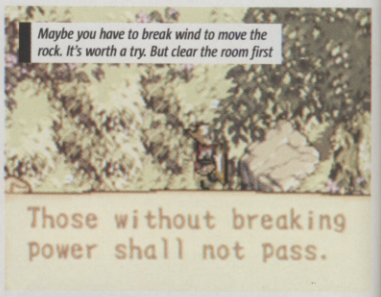
Some of the locations are huge, with many floors to explore, but the maps and arrows help you find your way

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE

Well that's all very bloody clever, but is the actual gameplay any good? A game pak could double up as a nuclear fission device, but if it doesn't make you smile or entertain you when you whack it in the slot all the fancy knobs in the world are worthless. Fortunately Boktai has the gameplay chops to back up the technical wizardry, as you might expect from Solid



A ghoul Klorofolum attack feels like having a thousand snotballs launched at you. Icky and deadly



Maybe you have to break wind to move the rock. It's worth a try. But clear the room first

Solar Lamps are useful items on rainy days. Use your Solar Gun on them to provide instant illumination

Each dungeon or area plays differently every time you enter. Don't expect to see the same trap twice. The first time you visit you

BLACK SUN HOLE

might have to face off against a giant sword. The next you might have to simply kill all enemies. It's a doom-filled lottery!

As soon as you arrive in a trap area a warning sign lets you know what you must do to escape

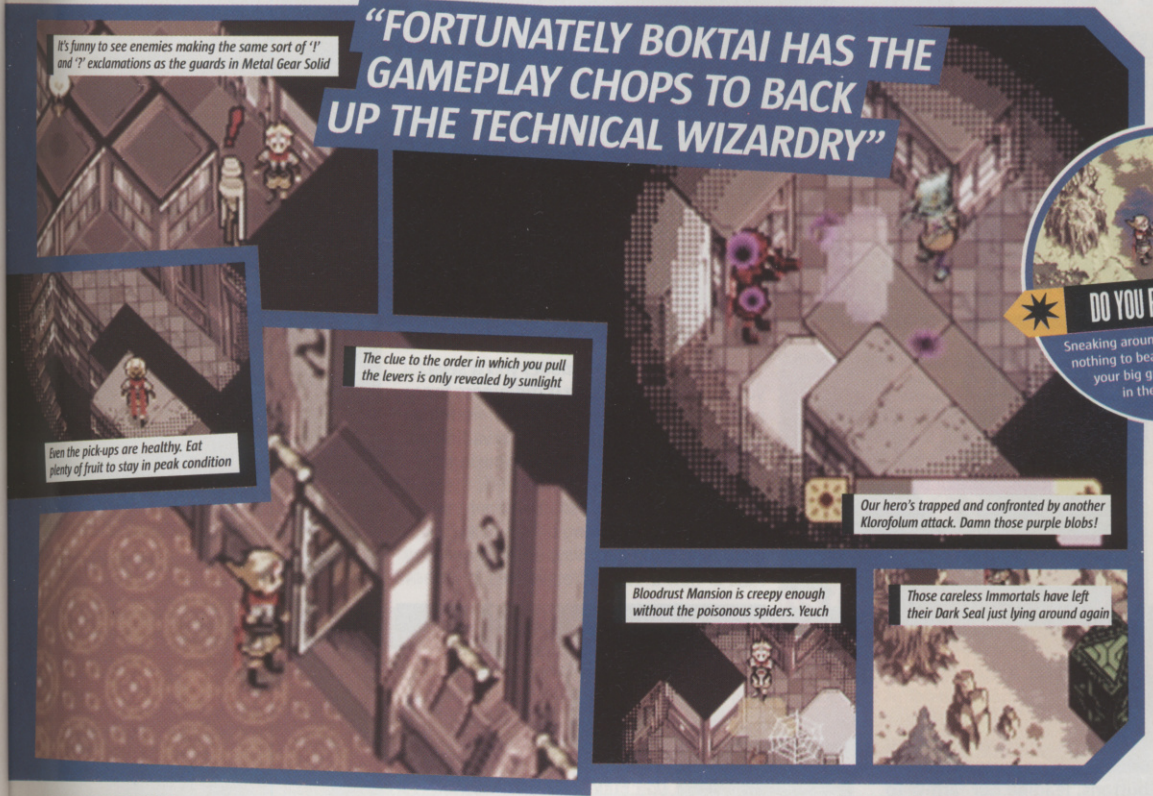
Here, you must destroy all the Clay Golums. No sneaking and avoiding them!

Luckily, some Golums actually smash themselves to bits when trying to kill you!

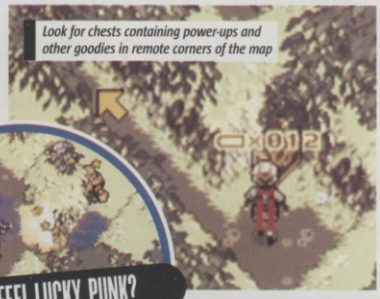
When your Solar Gun smashes the last one into tiny pieces you can escape

"FORTUNATELY BOKTAI HAS THE GAMEPLAY CHOPS TO BACK UP THE TECHNICAL WIZARDRY"

It's funny to see enemies making the same sort of '!' and '?' exclamations as the guards in Metal Gear Solid



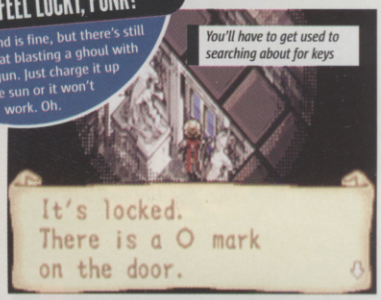
Look for chests containing power-ups and other goodies in remote corners of the map



DO YOU FEEL LUCKY, PUNK?

Sneaking around is fine, but there's still nothing to beat blasting a ghoul with your big gun. Just charge it up in the sun or it won't work. Oh.

You'll have to get used to searching about for keys



The clue to the order in which you pull the levers is only revealed by sunlight

Even the pick-ups are healthy. Eat plenty of fruit to stay in peak condition

Our hero's trapped and confronted by another Klorofolum attack. Damn those purple blobs!

Bloodrust Mansion is creepy enough without the poisonous spiders. Yeuch

Those careless Immortals have left their Dark Seal just lying around again

PREVIOUS GAMES

- Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons Of Liberty, Metal Gear Solid, Z.O.E, Yu-Gi-Oh! Dark Duel Stories, Silent Scope 3

HARD FACTS

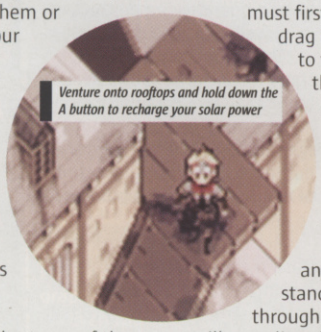
- There are in total seven Immortal bosses that you will have to face
- You should be able to find a staggering 26 Frames for your Solar Gun
- Even under a cloudy sky, two bars will still light up on your Sun Sensor

DID YOU KNOW?

- The sun is 870,000 miles in diameter, 109 times larger than the Earth. In fact, you could fit over one million Earths inside the sun, if you want to try.

Snake's creator. It's all so ingeniously simple: undead ghouls (known as Boks) hunt you down and try to suck out your brains, and you either avoid them or shoot 'em with your sunlight-powered Solar Gun. Easy as that.

As with Metal Gear Solid, you're almost encouraged to sneak around at times by the limits placed on your weaponry.



Venture onto rooftops and hold down the A button to recharge your solar power

During the early stages of the game, before you've managed to acquire the special Star lenses that store solar energy, you'll find your Solar Gun empties with alarming rapidity. Most of the time it makes more sense to use the MGS-style skills of sneaking and avoidance.

At the end of each stage you'll find an Immortal boss who you must first defeat and then drag in his coffin back to the beginning of the stage to be dusted with a special tool called a Pile Driver, which requires sunlight to operate.

If you've left any enemies standing on your way through the level, they will now, literally, come back to haunt you, as you will be unable to attack whilst dragging the coffin and it's very hard to act stealthy when pulling a huge wooden box. Take too long and the coffin will start wriggling and shaking as the decaying occupant tries to escape, alerting all ghouls in the area! It's hilariously disconcerting the first time it happens.

Throughout, there's that familiar feeling of quirkiness that exists in all of Hideo Kojima's games. The use of sunlight really is an amazing innovation, and makes you wonder what sort of copycat games it will inspire. If only all games were so clever. ✷

Solar Chargers are scattered about, to charge your Solar Gun if you're playing indoors

SOLID DJANGO

He may not have a stubbly beard and a bandana, and he may be on the trail of zombies rather than mysterious military men, but Django has been very much created in Solid Snake's image.

He's certainly a bit stealthy, with the same penchant for hugging walls and panting, and he also has Snake's trick of knocking on walls to lure the enemy away.

Zombie ghouls are particularly stupid and easy to fool. It's like taking candy from a baby

Breathe in, and don't so much as move a whisker or they'll come looking for you

Tap on the wall to confuse the little gits and send them into a frenzy, then run away

ALEX H

CVG 2ND OPINION

Harnessing the power of sun in Boktai is certainly a great, innovative idea, like Maura says, it's just a pity that we Brits don't have the most reliable of weather. As for the rest of the game, it's good if a bit repetitive, but I didn't find it as engrossing or addictive as one of the GBA Castlevania titles – even though it treads on similar ground.

MAURA

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS — 86

Looks nice enough – a healthy mixture of dank dungeons and scenic delights

SOUND — 87

The music is suitably menacing, and some of the characters even speak!

GAMEPLAY — 80

Not quite as innovative as the overall concept would suggest

LASTING APPEAL — 80

A fairly short game – you'll definitely finish wanting more. Is the sun out yet?

A truly innovative game that makes you wish you lived in a country where the weather doesn't change every three minutes. Brilliant fun.

OVERALL SCORE 85

HOW IT COMPARES

- CASTLEVANIA: AOS
- BOKTAI: TSUIYH
- FIRE EMBLEM

RELEASE DATE JUNE

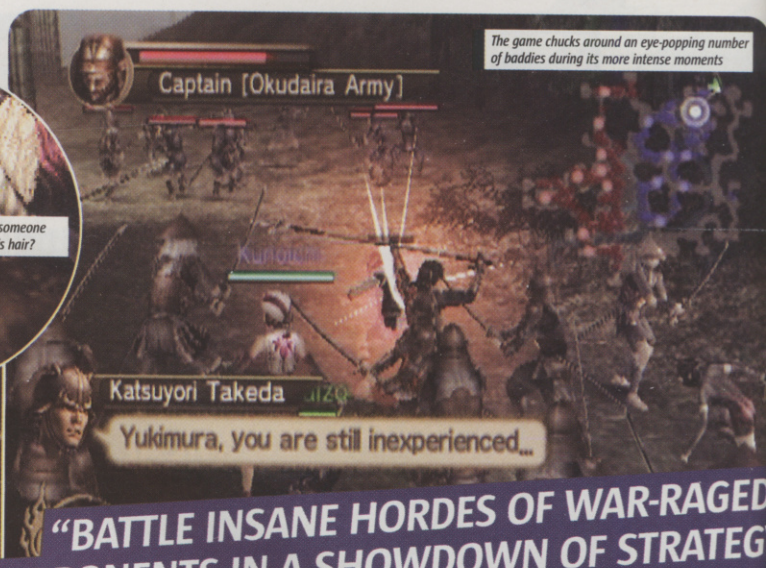
GAME INFO COST: £39.99 PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS
- DEV: KOEI
- HTTP://WWW.KOEI.COM/SAMURAIWARRIORS/
- CONTACT: 01932 450000

SAMURAI WARRIORS

Honour, revenge and blistered digits in KOEI's Sixteenth Century samurai swash-buckler

If he's based on someone real, who cuts his hair?



The game chucks around an eye-popping number of baddies during its more intense moments

Unleashing your mental magic attack turns hordes of enemies into bloody stumps instantly

"BATTLE INSANE HORDES OF WAR-RAGED OPPONENTS IN A SHOWDOWN OF STRATEG AND EXTREME BUTTON-MASHING"

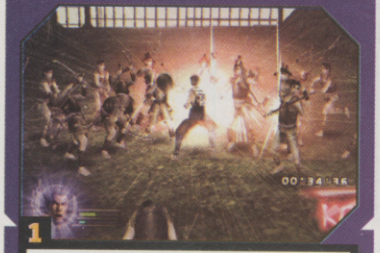
Insane combos and killer KOs are tallied during levels and help beef up your stats

Plug in a second controller for samurai-shredding shenanigans with a mate

BUDDY BUILDING

Enter Officer mode to create your own fiendish samurai warrior from scratch. Unfortunately, to begin with your character's as limp as a leek in a thunderstorm.

You'll need to train him up from puny weakling to rippled stud through a series of mini-games if you want to take him out on the battlefield in the other modes.



1 ■ Melee mode tests you in hand-to-hand combat, pitting you against an avalanche of adversaries

2 ■ Burst tests speed and dexterity – find the exit and avoid the perilous traps and marauding miscreants

3 ■ Face an infinite number of archers in Deflect mode – swing your sword and flip arrows back to mamma

4 ■ Archery brushes up your bowmanship – penetrate the pretty ladies as they run at you screaming

All across the country thousands of us spend long evenings in darkened rooms, bashing away at our buttons, leading our 'army' to 'victory'. Now, thanks to Koei, even more of us will be doing it, and even in front of our mums.

Samurai Warriors comes manure-fresh from the same hack 'n' slash stable as the hit Dynasty Warriors series. So, more rampaging across vast terrains and battling insane hordes of war-raged opponents in a showdown of strategy and extreme button-mashing. But this time, the sword-swinging is set on the bloody battlefields of 16th Century Japan.

Each of the five playable characters have three methods of attack to aid in the endless carcass-shredding – a powerful single direction slash, a weaker but wide-reaching acrobatic swipe and a devastating magical attack for felling heaps of foes.

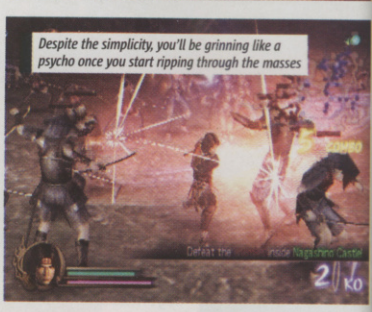
In the main Story mode, you'll select your character and slug it out across five main levels – victory depends on meeting certain simple criteria such as invading an enemy camp or bringing an opposing General to his knees. Some levels, however, feature hidden goals that you can meet to go slashing off down a branching story pathway, unlocking a host of new areas and objectives.

BACK FOR BLOOD

While it shouldn't take more than a few hours to hack your way through each character's tale, Samurai Warriors chucks in a rampant roster of modes and unlockables to keep replay value high. Officer mode lets you build your own warrior, while Free mode enables you to mix and match characters and conditions for combat. There's also a two-player Versus and Co-operative mode thrown in as well. So far so good.

The game also provides some truely tense moments of adrenaline-fuelled annihilation against an often staggering number of opponents on the battlefield – it's the sheer thrill of combat that ends up being so addictive.

But the repetitive hack 'n' slash mechanics mean anyone looking for a bit of depth to their destruction is likely to feel a bit short-changed. If superficial yet satisfying sword-swinging action is your bag though, get your pad-gnarled fingers on this. ✷

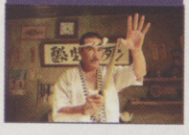


Despite the simplicity, you'll be grinning like a psycho once you start ripping through the masses

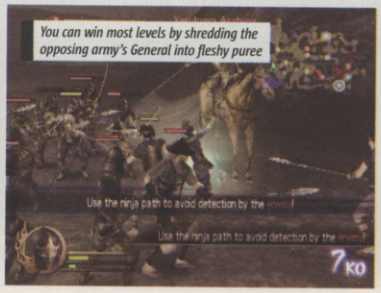
PREVIOUS GAMES
- Dynasty Warriors 4, Disgaea – The Hour of Darkness, Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII, Pacific Theatre of Operations IV

HARD FACTS
- Over ninety levels
- Five playable characters
- One-player Officer
- Story and Free modes
- Two-player Vs and co-operative modes

DID YOU KNOW?
- The playable character Hanzo Hattori, based on a real-life Ninja Master who fought extensively during the Japanese Feudal war, has been immortalised in celluloid by Sonny Chiba for over a decade, most recently in Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill



It might look like a scary ambush, but thrash the buttons wildly and you'll be fine



You can win most levels by shredding the opposing army's General into fleshy puree

CVG VERDICT

MATT W

GRAPHICS 79
Sparse environments but the number of on-screen enemies is impressive

SOUND 69
Instantly forgettable music and repetitive war cries won't take long to grate

GAMEPLAY 74
Simple button-mashing might not satisfy your blood-lust if it's depth you're after

LASTING APPEAL 83
Loads of characters-specific conquests and a mass of unlockables to discover

Dynasty Warriors fans and hack 'n' slash nuts will lap up the Feudal blood-spilling on offer, but the shallow gameplay mechanics won't be to everyone's taste.

OVERALL SCORE 76

HOW IT COMPARES
- DYNASTY WARRIORS
- SAMURAI WARRIORS
- NINJA GAIDEN

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

GAME INFO
COST: £29.99
PLAYERS: 1

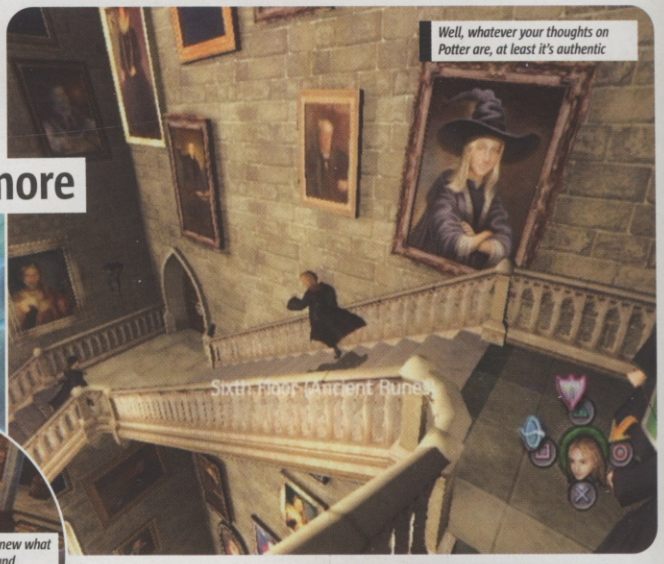
CONTACT INFO
* PUB: EA
* DEV: EA
* HTTP://HARRYPOTTER.EA.COM/
* CONTACT: 01932 450000

EXTRAS
* EYETOY

PS2

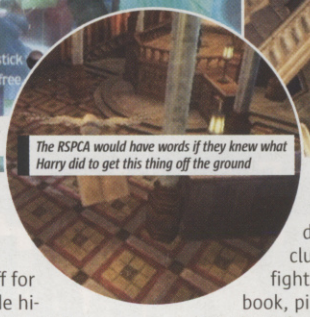
HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN

PS2 Potter with more magic than David Blaine's shazam hands



Want to smear crap across the screen with your bare hands? This EyeToy game's for you!

The Dementors are suitably creepy but, let's face it, this ain't The Suffering


The RSPCA would have words if they knew what Harry did to get this thing off the ground

Whether you're enchanted by JK Rowling's omnipresent creation or entertain visions of shoving the teenage wizard's wand where the sun don't shine, there's no avoiding the fact that EA is squeezing Harry Potter games out faster than poop on a prune diet.

In keeping with the third book and upcoming film, this latest movie tie-in sports a bleaker edge than before. Gone are the twee graphics and kiddy-pleasing gameplay in favour of something that looks darker and plays deeper.

While the action's still split in two, with players learning new tricks during lesson time then heading off for some more plot-based arcade hi-jinx at night, Azkaban takes its cue from the Zelda series to add beef to its bones.

You control Hermione, Ron and Harry through the frequent dungeon crawls – each has unique abilities, forcing you to think laterally and switch between them to progress. Unlike previous Potters, it's the variety of challenges that stops it feeling formulaic. In the first ten minutes, you'll drag Harry from the clutches of a Dementor, fight off a marauding spell book, pilot an owl through the university rafters and sneak past Snape in a simplistic but engaging stealth-a-thon.

Throw in the PS2-specific EyeToy bonus games, including lung-straining ghost-busting and bizarre window washing, and you've a surprisingly enjoyable package. Lack of originality and Potter stigma will turn some off but fans will lap it up. *

MATT

CVG VERDICT

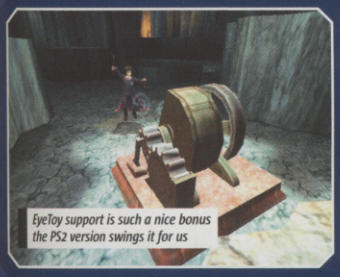
Derivative but fun and the EyeToy support is a great bonus. Won't win over Harry-haters but fans will be willy, er, wand-waving into the wee small hours.

OVERALL SCORE
82

HOW IT COMPARES
HARRY POTTER: COS
HARRY POTTER: POA
BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

REVIEWS ROUND-UP

WE COULDN'T RAM ALL OUR REVIEWS IN THE REST OF THE MAG, SO COME ON FATTY, TREAT YOURSELF TO AN EXTRA HELPING. BURP...


EyeToy support is such a nice bonus the PS2 version swings it for us

PRISONER OF AZKABAN

* OUT: 4 JUNE * COST: £39.99 * PLAYERS: 1 * GC

Harry's still a pretty fun endeavour on the GC, even without the EyeToy support.

If anything, the controls feel a bit tighter and the graphics are definitely sharper, but those PS2 extras still swing it if you own both formats and are struggling over which to get.

78

It all feels a bit cheap and tacky compared to MK Super Circuit

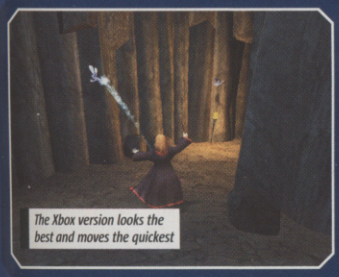
DIGIMON RACING

* OUT: NOW * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 1-4 * GBA

Surprise! It's another sub-standard Mario Kart rip-off, this time with Digi-critters.

The Digivolve gauge tries a twist by pumping your creatures to the max as you roll over designated areas and there's some dull boss battles, but it's far too slow and ugly for non-Digi-fans.

62


The Xbox version looks the best and moves the quickest

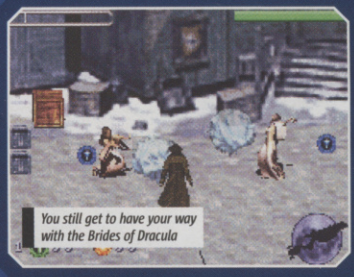
PRISONER OF AZKABAN

* OUT: 4 JUNE * COST: £39.99 * PLAYERS: 1 * XBOX

The Xbox version trounces on the PS2 Potter in terms of presentation – crisper graphics, smoother FMV and richer effects.

Even the load times seem noticably reduced. Alas though, without that EyeToy support this still ain't the cream of the Hogwart's crop.

78


You still get to have your way with the Brides of Dracula

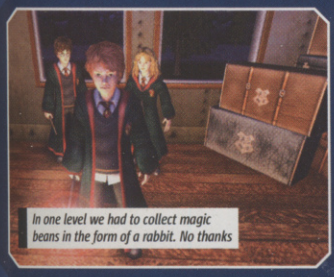
VAN HELSING

* OUT: 14 JUNE * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 1 * GBA

We loved the monster-mashing console version of this movie tie-in.

But it's been simplified so much for this hand-held jaunt it's about as deep as a gnat's bum hole. And probably about as much fun to explore. Fine for braindead button-bashers or Van fans.

56


In one level we had to collect magic beans in the form of a rabbit. No thanks

PRISONER OF AZKABAN

* OUT: 4 JUNE * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 1 * PC

Developed independently to the console versions, PC Potter casts aside the darker visuals and challenging gameplay for some fairly soulless platforming antics.

The cheap and cheerful look is great for kids but this game wouldn't challenge you.

64

DKC2's only innovation is letting you play with two characters at once. Wow, original

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY 2: DKQ

* OUT: 25 JUNE * COST: £29.99 * PLAYERS: 1-4 * GBA

Here's a question: why would you sick 30 quid on a decade-old SNES game?

Either you want to enjoy an unashamedly old-school platformer that tries nothing new but does what it does well... or you find that daft and a bit patronising. Your choice.

61

IMPORT REVIEWS

FULLY INDEPENDENT & MULTIFORMAT ✷ TRUST NO ONE ELSE

A DAY AT THE RACES

Despite all the excitement over E3 as I write, I don't expect there'll be anything as cool over there as Katamari Damacy reviewed this month! Not unless it's on Game Boy SP anyway. Make sure you read Matt's review – that game is truly special.

I'd like to see Derby Stallion picked up for the first time by a western publisher. It ain't only in Japan that horse racing is a major big thing – not that I care much for it myself, but when I'm dodging TV channels showing the races, I always wonder why there isn't a decent game on sale over here. Anyway, Derby Stallion leads the pack in terms of horse racing on console. Pity there was so much Japanese text to wade through or Maura may have had a better time of it.

Me, I got to play the old 2D fighting game again, and that's cool – especially when it's a new Guilty Gear. Harder to swallow than the comparatively sensible SNK and Capcom offerings, for me Guilty Gear is really refreshing to pick up, especially since I could take it online and get totally embarrassed by friends over in Japan!

The games were harder to pick up than usual this month, since they're not the usual sort of thing you'd find in the import shops. So thanks very much to CEX for sourcing games that even they'd never heard of, and as a favour to them I should point out that CEX is still the only place you can trade used import games (apart from Nintendo) for any new game – imported or UK.

Hey, isn't it time we all started counting down for the launch of PSP?

Paul Davies

Paul Davies *The Import King*

RELEASE DATE	GAME INFO	CONTACT INFO	ONLINE INFO
OUT NOW	IMPORT COST: £59.99 PLAYERS: 1-2	✷ PUB: SAMMY ✷ DEV: ARC SYSTEM WORKS ✷ WWW.GUILTYGEARX.COM	✷ 2 PLAYERS ONLY, OPTIMATCH, CREATE A SESSION, JOIN A SESSION

Unlock bonus extras such as this movie intro to Guilty Gear X, and watch them all night

Robo Ky is the new character created especially for Reload. He's a robot, see

CVG GOLD AWARD

GUILTY GEAR XX RELOAD

Whatever it is these guys are feeling guilty about, it sure as hell ain't the game

The reason Guilty has survived long enough to acquire not one X but two, plus a Reload for good measure, is simple: the series flat-out rocks – as a legion of fans will testify.

In a market ruled by Capcom and SNK, that to most minds appeared to have been dying not so long ago, Arc System Works boldly came out fighting. Guilty's even larger than larger-than-life characters are all beautifully drawn and animated, and boast daring and downright stupid moves of which every one is a crowd-pleaser.

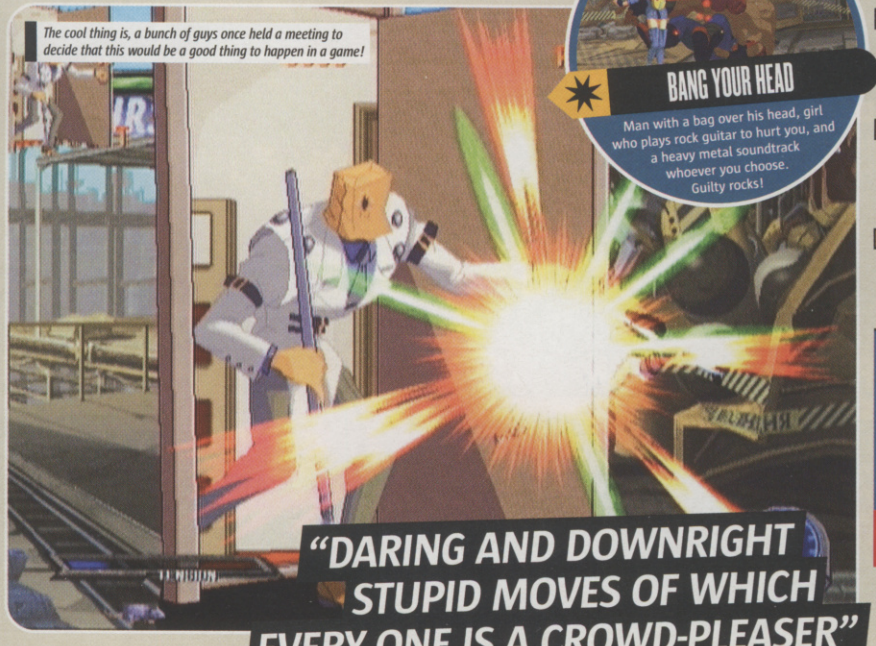
Of course to have survived so long in such a tough arena, Guilty needs credibility through its various systems used to win the fight. Instead of a super meter, Guilty uses a Tension Gauge that boosts extra special moves for each character, plus a new feature exclusive to XX – the Burst Gauge, which serves to counter-attack for more to-and-fro thrills. Reload is very similar to GGXX released on PlayStation 2 last year, only with more balanced gameplay and one extra character (Robo Ky). Plus for Xbox you can now take it on Live to prove who's the Guiltiest in the entire world.

We love this game for all the reasons a lot of people will hate it: the wacky characters, the 'holy grail' nature of the combat system to be mastered by only the very best players, of which we admit we are not worthy (yet). Xbox Reload has just been snapped up for release in the States by Majesco at a budget price. If the same happens over here, don't miss your chance to own the zaniest but most satisfyingly intense fighter on Earth! ✷

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Guilty Gear, Guilty Gear X, Guilty Gear XX: Midnight Carnival

HARD FACTS
- 20 playable characters
- Two power gauges
- Seven home versions of GG so far and counting

DID YOU KNOW?
- Big rock fans, it's claimed the developers lifted 'Reload' from a Metallica album of the same name.



BANG YOUR HEAD

Man with a bag over his head, girl who plays rock guitar to hurt you, and a heavy metal soundtrack whoever you choose. Guilty rocks!

"DARING AND DOWNRIGHT STUPID MOVES OF WHICH EVERY ONE IS A CROWD-PLEASER"

BURSTING TO SHOW YOU

The Burst Gauge helps fighters on the ropes by enabling combo-breaking moves.

For guys on the offence, difficult-to-land Burst moves are rewarded with a full Tension Gauge, and the potential to unleash a WORLD OF PAIN.

1 ■ When your back's against the wall, use a nifty little Burst move to break your opponent's combo

2 ■ If you're confident of your timing, landing Burst moves gives you a full Tension Gauge. Don't mess it up, dude

3 ■ Fluff Burst moves and you're left open to attack – kind of humiliating even for bag boy

4 ■ Arguably the most amazing display of 2D special effects to grace a games console, don't you think?

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 89
You may think the characters are daft, but you can't deny the visual quality is excellent

SOUND 87
Well, I love heavy metal so thumbs up for the music. Sound effects rock too!

GAMEPLAY 91
Not quite on a level with the best of SNK or Capcom, but certainly up there. Excellent!

LASTING APPEAL 90
Probably not the first choice of an evening, but it's a great warm-up act for sure

Make sure you name-check this in any conversation you have about fighting games. But more important than that, make sure you play it a lot!

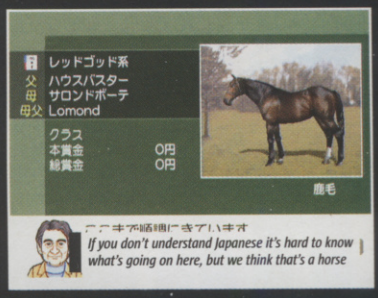
OVERALL SCORE 91

HOW IT COMPARES
- CAPCOM VS SNK 2
- GUILTY GEAR XX RELOAD
- DEAD OR ALIVE 3

LANGUAGE BARRIER: No problems figuring out what the modes are – you're just fighting for different rewards!

The polygon horses and riders make the races much more realistic

The jockeys talk about how tiny their feet are and who's got the most revolting shirt on



If you don't understand Japanese it's hard to know what's going on here, but we think that's a horse

"THE HORSES' HOOVES THUNDER OVER THE LUSH GREEN TURF AT BREATHTAKING SPEED"

DERBY STALLION 04

Raise thoroughbred horses to create money-spinning champions? Neigh problem!

You can count the number of horse racing games released in Europe and America on one hoof. Despite the popularity of the sport, it has somehow failed to catch the imagination of the gaming public.

It's a dramatically different situation in Japan: Derby Stallion 04 is the 12th game in the million-selling series and has sold by the bucketload.

PHOTO FINISH

While the idea of actually getting to control your prized horse yourself as it hurtles around the racetrack is an attractive one, this is the one aspect of the whole horse racing phenomenon that is unfortunately missing from the game. Derby Stallion 04 is essentially a sophisticated horse breeding sim, where you get to buy a horse at auction, raise it, breed it with other horses after studying sire line breeding tables, train it up and eventually enter it in the legendary Breeders' Cup circuit.

HORSES FOR COURSES

Since the game is so dependent on Japanese text it's hard to tell just how absorbing it is, but it certainly seems incredibly detailed, with all manner of trainers and experts popping up to offer you advice. You are also provided with sheets and sheets of notes, charts and form guides to look at and study. The overall presentation is very glossy, and the races themselves are spectacular. The horses' hooves thunder over the lush green turf at breathtaking speed, and you really do get a sense of the excitement of the racetrack. The jockeys and horses have all been enhanced using polygons since the previous version of the game, and the racing engine has been tweaked to provide supposedly more realistic races.

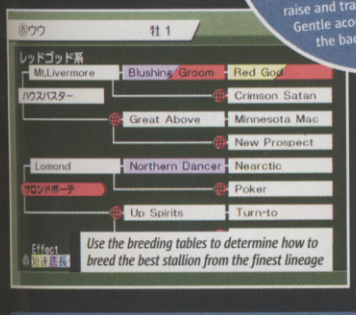
Although it's hard to give a definitive verdict on Derby Stallion 04 due to the language barrier, we would be very interested to see an English version released, as a quality horse breeding/racing sim would be a welcome change from all the usual sim subject matters. ✷

READY AND STABLE
This is your idyllic home base, where you raise and train your prize stallions. Gentle acoustic music strums in the background, just like in real life.

PREVIOUS GAMES
■ Derby Stallion 64, Derby Stallion 96, Derby Stallion 99

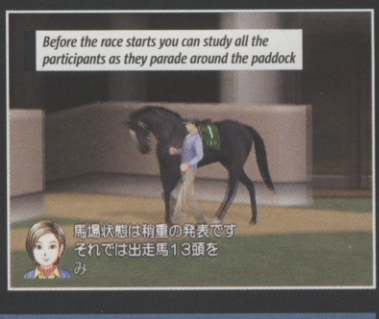
HARD FACTS
■ The races featured in the game range from 1000 meters to 3600 meters

DID YOU KNOW?
■ The Derby Stallion gaming series stretches as far back as 1991's Best Keiba Derby Stallion on the NES.



Use the breeding tables to determine how to breed the best stallion from the finest lineage

And they're off! You can almost smell the heady mixture of horse dung and freshly mown grass


Before the race starts you can study all the participants as they parade around the paddock

For the first time ever a Derby Stallion game features a Tokyo racetrack as part of the Breeders' Cup circuit

The tracks and horses featured are all taken from the real-life Breeders' Cup

MAURA

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS — P5
Very text-based, but the race meetings are incredibly realistic and exciting

SOUND — P3
Soothing acoustic music on your ranch and trumpets on race day pump up the adrenaline

GAMEPLAY — P4
Hard to judge. Not much in terms of action, but lots of depth if you like your paperwork

LASTING APPEAL — P6
Like most open-ended sims, you may well be playing it for months rather than weeks

Hard to play if you don't understand Japanese, but the idea of breeding horses and then entering them in races seems absorbing and refreshingly different.

OVERALL SCORE 75

HOW IT COMPARES
ANIMAL CROSSING
DERBY STALLION 04
THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

LANGUAGE BARRIER: Unfortunately, you really need to be fluent in Japanese as the majority of the gameplay revolves around studying form charts, diaries and breeding tables.

DAY AT THE RACES

The most exciting aspect of Derby Stallion 04 is the realistic racing sequences where you get to see your horse race against top thoroughbreds.

Even if you've never been to a horse race in your life, you'll be jumping up in the air and pounding the television as your prize stallion muscles his way through the pack – and hopefully into the Winners' Circle.

■ It all begins in the Paddock where the horses are paraded so that punters can study their form

■ The horses are then bundled into the stalls to await the crack of the starting pistol

■ Finally, the frontrunner reaches the winning post, and a thousand betting slips are torn up on the spot

RELEASE DATE OUT NOW

GAME INFO IMPORT COST: £55 PLAYERS: 1-2

CONTACT INFO
- PUB: NAMCO
- DEV: NAMCO
- HTTP://WWW.KATAMARIDAMACY.JP

KATAMARI DAMACY

The quick and easy alternative to elephantiasis – and it's got singing ducks!

These magazines block the route into the garden – build your ball to bust on through

It takes a lot to put a twinkle in our jaded eyes here at CVG. But from the second you hit the 'on' switch, you're bombarded with the kind of eye-popping insanity only the Japanese seem able to get away with.

It seems the king of some alien world got a bit bladdered and knocked all the stars out of the sky. It's up to you, as his tiny hammer-headed sprog, to return them to their rightful place.

To restore the heavens, you'll roll your tiny ball around the floor, gradually increasing its size by collecting junk from the litter-strewn environments. The larger your ball, the heftier the objects you'll be able to knock over and pick up. You'll also gain access to new areas as your mass of objects swells sufficiently to scale ledges, walls, cliffs and finally continents. Each level thwaps you with a target diameter to reach and a time limit to do it all in. If you're successful, the king will rocket your efforts into orbit and transform them into stars. The whole bizarre process seems so natural in fact, that clomping around the landscape looking for progressively more mountainous objects quickly takes on an almost Zen-like serenity. Shamelessly molesting a cow has never been so therapeutic.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- Kill.switch, Dead To Rights, Breakdown, MotoGP 3, Namco Museum

HARD FACTS
- Nine levels in Story mode, two-player Versus mode, unlockable characters and costumes

DID YOU KNOW?
- The Japanese fascination with giant alien invaders smashing up cities began in 1954 with the release of the movie Gojira. That's Godzilla to you and me.

BITE-SIZED BRILLIANCE

If we were going to grumble, it would be over the game's relatively limited gameplay mechanics – really, it never gets much more complicated than rolling and collecting. Seemingly acknowledging this, Namco's chosen to cut the game short at nine levels, ensuring the action's over well before it gets repetitive. While this means you probably won't need more than five or six hours to beat Story mode, the whole thing's such a joyful experience you won't really care.

To counter the brevity, the game catalogues all the objects you've hoovered up during play, giving completists something more to work towards once the credits have rolled. There's a bunch of item-specific fetch quests and even a simple two-player deathmatch mode where you and a mate can battle it out to see who's got the biggest balls.

Even with issues of length, Katamari Damacy oozes such a staggering concoction of minty fresh originality, wackiness and pure, unadulterated ball-tumbling fun that we can't help but recommend it. Pick it up and you'll be giggling like a Japanese schoolgirl on nitrous oxide for a month. ✷

KATAMARI DA-MENTAL

If we scored games solely on weirdness, Katamari Damacy would be looking at a CVG Gold award within 30 seconds of booting up.

Between the singing fish, dancing pandas, trippy rainbows and theme tune so catchy you'll be taking a hacksaw to your skull, it practically justifies the cost of import alone. The fact that your mum, the Queen, has a face like Bertie Bassett on a wimmin's gusset sponge, is a bonus.

1
- Enter the singing ducks. If you're not yelling along to the music at this point, you're probably dead

2
- The little green dancing fella? That's you. The hammer-headed woman at the back? That's your mother

3
- And with a thousand 'na na nas' ringing in your ears, off we go to the nipple-shaped castle

By the time you're nobbling land masses, your face will have split through grinning

MATT

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 8
Initially simplistic, your jaw will drop once you've sucked up your first volcano

SOUND 9
Hysterical effects and music so good your ears will want to touch you up

GAMEPLAY 8
Refreshingly original, unapologetically bonkers and unwholesomely gratifying

LASTING APPEAL 7
Story mode is over in a few hours but there's multiplayer and unlockables to find too

Breathtakingly original and utterly loopy – it could do with being a bit longer, but ultimately this is as close to pure, undiluted happiness on a disc as you'll get.

OVERALL SCORE 85

HOW IT COMPARES
- PARAPPA THE RAPPER
- KATAMARI DAMACY
- VIB RIBBON

LANGUAGE BARRIER: You'll be lost as far as the plot goes and the interface is self-consciously bonkers – picking up the gameplay is simplicity itself though.

GLOBAL DOMINATION

When you first land on the planet, you're barely big enough to threaten a dwarf bed mite.

But as you tumble your way through the environments, picking up an increasingly bulky bounty, your sticky sphere will swell to gargantuan proportions. Pretty soon you'll be mowing down the very same people, buildings and even cities that were obstructing your progress earlier. Justice!

- Initially, you're mouse-fodder. Trust us, they'll get their dues...

- Once you're big enough to gobble humans, you're getting somewhere

- Rampage over the houses you were scurrying about in earlier

RELEASE DATE
OUT NOW

GAME INFO
IMPORT COST: £59.99
PLAYERS: 1-8

CONTACT INFO
* PUB: KONAMI
* DEV: KONAMI
* WWW.KONAMITYO.COM/WE

CVG GOLD AWARD

WINNING ELEVEN 7 INTERNATIONAL

Does this Japan-only version of PES hint at what PES4 may have in store?

We guess we're still PES maniacs here on CVG, and it doesn't help that Konami releases updated versions every few months to keep our appetites keen.

The most recent to have been launched in Japan, where as you know the series is called Winning Eleven, is Winning Eleven 7: International. We need to clarify that this version of WE7:I is not the same as the one that came out in America with that name, nor is it the same as the Korean version. Both US and Korean versions are simply PES3, coded in NTSC and with different language options. The one you need to know about is specifically the Japanese release, because this is the one in which there have been gameplay enhancements.

PREVIOUS GAMES
- PES, PES2, PES3

HARD FACTS
- New stadiums
- New animations
- Revised squads
- Improved music

DID YOU KNOW?
- Trevor Brooking's commentary for Pro Evo is scientifically proven to cure insomnia. FACT!

IRON HEAD

If you're a PES freak, playing every version that comes out almost every day and over the weekend, any improvement to the game is sure to excite. There is very little different here, but the changes do make for a more realistic game than PES3.

To begin with you'll notice that the ball moves more freely, creating more chances for players to retrieve a wayward ball in a tussle, and requiring cleaner takedowns from crosses and improved timing on volleys or headers. Make a good connection on a header and it will rocket away from foreheads. On the other hand if your timing is off, or the player isn't good enough, the ball will scuff off their bonce with little power and in an unpredictable fashion. When taking free kicks and corners, the new ball properties are even clearer, as it's not so easy to score with an out-swinging effort.

OTHER UPDATES

Cosmetically hardly anything has changed. A player's arms hang more naturally before taking corners or free kicks. There seem to be new animations associated with headers and while challenging for the ball. Key players have been given updated facial hair, and most squads have the majority of players they're supposed to: Chelsea has Mutu and Crespo, AC Milan has Kaka up front, Arsenal has Toure as a regular at the back. National squads have had their stats altered too.

If you've money burning a hole in your pocket and you just can't get enough of PES, you won't be disappointed should you invest in this semi-update. Everyone else out there: wait for PES4. *

STILL UNOFFICIAL
Most of the strips – club and national – are unofficial 'near enough' versions of their real-life counterparts. Fingers crossed PES4 will go official.

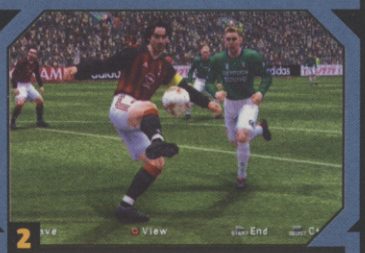
"WHEN TAKING FREE KICKS AND CORNERS, THE NEW BALL PROPERTIES ARE EVEN CLEARER"

LOOK CLOSELY...

Like we said, the changes aren't drastic but they help toward making the game a better experience overall. The best examples of graphical improvements we can see are higher-resolution replays, but that's hardly worth mentioning.

Rock music has replaced the Euro Rave Trance tosh for the presentation screens, and is the soundtrack for the replays too!

■ Barging someone off the ball looks far more realistic and you get to win the ball back more often



■ You get to appreciate the higher-res graphics during replays, particularly when someone is shown a card

CVG VERDICT

GRAPHICS 92
All the detail is there, and the animation is more realistic than ever

SOUND 87
Good music for a change, terrific stadium atmosphere and nice whoomph on the ball

GAMEPLAY 94
Sublime as ever. We're not sure about these super-headers just yet, though...

LASTING APPEAL 96
Like any PES worth its salt, this is gonna be played morning, noon and night

Of course it's worth buying, but only if you're a diehard PES fan who wants to grow with the series step by step – and you're seriously minted

OVERALL SCORE 94

HOW IT COMPARES
PES3
WE7: INTERNATIONAL
EURO 2004-05-07

LANGUAGE BARRIER: *No problem at all – you can change the language to English.*

AMERICAN RELEASE DATES

PLAYSTATION 2

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
11.6	Transformers	Atari
19.6	Bujingai: Forbidden City	BAM! Entertainment
1.7	MTV Music Generator 3	Codemasters
	Malice	Mud Duck
	Powerdrome	Mud Duck
2.7	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA
7.7	Shell Shock: Nam '67	Eidos Interactive
8.7	Ribbitking	Bandai
	Smash Court Tennis Pro Tournament 2	Namco
14.7	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway
15.7	Carmen Sandiego: The Secret Of The Stolen Drums	BAM!
	Front Mission 4	Square-Enix
	McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami
	Warchess	XS Games

XBOX

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
17.6	Daredevil: The Man Without Fear	Encore
20.6	FILA World Tour Tennis	Xicat Interactive
25.6	IndyCar Series 2005	Codemasters
	Metal Slug 3	SNK NeoGeo
26.6	Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos Interactive
1.7	DroneZ	Metro 3D
	Malice	Mud Duck
	The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay	Vivendi
2.7	Harry Potter And The Prisoner of Azkaban	EA
7.7	Shell Shock: Nam '67	Eidos Interactive
8.7	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ
	Room Zoom	Jaleco Entertainment
14.7	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway
15.7	Carmen Sandiego: The Secret Of The Stolen Drums	BAM! Ent.
	Worms 3D	Sega

GBA

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
24.6	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo
	Mighty Beanz Pocket Puzzles	Majesco Inc
25.6	Ice Nine	BAM! Entertainment
	River City Ransom EX	Atlus Software
	Sonic Advance 3	Sega
	Ultimate Card Games	Telegames
30.6	Dragon Ball Z: Supersonic Warriors	Atari
	World Reborn	Destination Software
1.7	Crash Bandicoot Purple: Ripto's Rampage	Vivendi Universal
	Duel Masters: Sempai Legends	Atari
	Spyro Orange: The Cortex Conspiracy	Vivendi Universal
3.7	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA
7.7	Bomberman	Nintendo
	Excitebike	Nintendo
	Ice Climber	Nintendo
	Legend Of Zelda	Nintendo
	Mega Man Battle Network 4	Capcom
	Pac-Man	Nintendo
	Super Mario Bros	Nintendo
	Xevious	Nintendo
8.7	Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	Atlus
11.7	Spider-Man 2	Activision
14.7	Sabre Wulf	THQ

GAMECUBE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
18.6	Pool Paradise	Ignition Entertainment
2.7	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA
7.7	The Legend Of Zelda: Four Swords	Nintendo
8.7	Room Zoom	Jaleco Entertainment
15.7	Megaman X: Command Mission	Capcom
	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft

JAPANESE RELEASE DATES

PLAYSTATION 2

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
6.5	Online Pro Wrestling	Yukes
20.5	Mountain Bikers	SCE
	Winning Post 6 Maximum	KOEI
	Ultraman	Bandai
	Curry House CoCo	Dorart
27.6	Densha De GO! Final	Taito
	Mahjong Battle	Mainichi Communications
	Yoshino House	Success
	Iris No Atelier: Eternal Manor	Gust
	Colourful Box – To Love	Kido
	Super Robot Battle MX	Banpresto
	PANZER FRONT Aus:B	Enterbrain
	Beast Sapp	Japan Amusement
	Vib Ripple	SCE
	Football Kingdom	Namco
	Bloody Roar 4	Hudson
	Princess Holiday	Alchemist
	Lost Sophia	Idea Factory
	Pachinko (Winning Technique)	Sammy
3.7	Nobunaga	Success
	Spawn	Namco
10.7	Cherry Hill Firefighters	Irem
	Love Beat	D3 Publishers
	Anime Battle	Konami
17.7	Pizzicato Polka	Kid
	12 Kingdoms	Konami
	Espegaruda	Alco
	Gunslinger Girl	Bandai
	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami

XBOX

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
20.6	Metal Arms: Glitch In The Sky	Microsoft
27.6	Blue Tears	Panther Software

GBA

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
13.6	Gundam SEED	Bandai
27.6	Metroid Zero Mission	Nintendo
	Ja-Ja Maru Jr	Jaleco
17.6	Sonic Advance 3	Sega
	Frogger	Konami

GAMECUBE

DATE	GAME	PUBLISHER
27.6	Wario World	Nintendo

COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES CVG

Big 50!

Only the best and biggest games make it into our Big 50. Don't fancy any of this month's reviews? One of these'll please you – guaranteed!

GALLEON 92%

■ Xbox ■ SCi ■ £39.99

Unmissable adventure classic. You'll soon see why it took, like, a million years to get released – slick game engine, mental levels, imaginative puzzles, sublime controls, class character animation and cinematic voice acting, plus a story more gripping than a nympho munter after a year alone on a desert island. And crams a lifetime's worth of seamen into a few hours of pleasure, too.

BREATHTAKING AND WELL WORTH THE WAIT, GALLEON DESERVES TO BE A MONSTER HIT

007 EVERYTHING OR NOTHING 83%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA ■ £39.99

EA must love pain, 'cos every year it does a Bond game and every year someone disses it for not being as good as GoldenEye. Same this year, only it really isn't that far off. No, honestly.

ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING 91%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

Proof that strategy games aren't for speccy twats called DarthMaul897364. Advance Wars 2 is addictive, challenging and... uh-oh, the F word... fun!

BATTLEFIELD VIETNAM 88%

■ PC ■ EA ■ £29.99

It's 1942 shoved through EA's update sausage factory, but packing more Vietnam War movie moments than a Huey doorgunner has ammo.

BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT 91%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ Acclaim ■ £19.99 - 39.99

For people that love driving VERY FAST, this is a gift from the gods. No-frills, balls-out, unadulterated arcade racing with wicked pile-ups. Still ace a year on.

CASTLEVANIA 85%

■ PS2 ■ Konami ■ £39.99

Fangtastic and faithful recreation of all that's great about the series, from the exploration and puzzle-solving to spot-on combat.

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 03-04 84%

■ PC ■ Eidos ■ £29.99

With less bugs and updated player stats, say goodbye both to soap and the real world, and embrace the crack-like phenomenon that is Champ Man. Ugly as a Southgate/Rooney lovechild, mind.

CIVILIZATION III 90%

■ PC ■ Atari ■ £9.99 (Conquest add-on £19.99)

Better than history lessons taught by a page 3 girl, re-write history as it should've been – with YOU in charge. Strategy-wise, it's as deep as it gets.

DISGAEA 88%

■ PS2 ■ Koei ■ £39.99

Ugly and grim sounding yet incredibly well endowed in the gameplay department, this is to console strategy games what Wayne Rooney is to footie.

FAR CRY 91%

■ PC ■ Ubisoft ■ £34.99

Best PC shooter for one-player right now, the lush tropical settings are a real holiday from the usual clichéd blood-spattered gothic settings.

FIGHT NIGHT 2004 89%

■ PS2, Xbox ■ EA ■ £39.99

We expect polished, big licence games from EA, but analog stick punch control is a revelation that'll get more ripped off than a Yank tourist in Soho.

FINAL FANTASY X 88%

■ PS2 ■ Sony ■ £19.99

The first FF for PS2 was a Choco-fanciers wet-dream. Massive and absorbing, the purer levelling up and skills system kicks over-drives up X-2's ass.

FIRE EMBLEM 85%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

When battle strategy and role-playing meet, you know the unholy bastard hellspawn of Beelzebub is so addictive it's going to take over your waking life.

F-ZERO GX 91%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99

Frantically fast futuristic racer that proves Cube packs some processing punch. It won't make that carry-handle look any less stupid though.

GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK 95%

■ PS2, XBOX ■ Rockstar ■ £39.99

Two classics for the price of one, GTA lets you loose in a conrete jungle where anything goes, so long as it's on the wrong side of the law. Slick!

HALO 95%

■ Xbox, PC ■ Microsoft ■ £19.99

Sci-fi shooter that sold the system, two years on and many console shooters are still struggling to come up to par. Worth owning an Xbox just to play.

MARIO KART: DOUBLE DASH!! 86%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99

Closer to the N64 than the beloved SNES version, DD tries to be a crowd-pleaser but some players hate its kiddier karts and stretched-out tracks.

NINJA GAIDEN 93%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

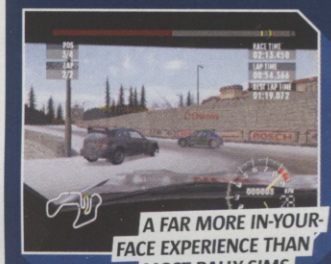
A vast and constantly surprising hack 'em up rammed with an impressive variety of enemies and genuinely fantastic and inventive bosses. It's hard to stress how enormous and challenging the game is. There's a solid 40 hours of gameplay even when you know what you're doing, and, though it's always fair, it's never kind – you MUST master the skills to progress. An Xbox essential.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL GO BUY IT NOW SO YOU KNOW WHAT EVERYONE WILL BE TALKING ABOUT FOR THE NEXT YEAR

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2 90%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

If you think oiling up your big end, sticking a big bore up your tailpipe and praying for a crowd to watch you get good traction out in the countryside is purely for hardcore rally pervs, then this is for you. Forget the boring techie shite – the emphasis here is on getting behind the wheel and enjoying the rush of belting along bumpy roads at insane speeds. Best rally game handling we've ever come across and the visuals are simply stunning, plus it's ace online.



A FAR MORE IN-YOUR-FACE EXPERIENCE THAN MOST RALLY SIMS

MARIO SUNSHINE 92%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £19.99

Reinvented platform action thanks to the Ron Jeremy look-alike's new backpack. More magical moments than David Blaine's shazam hands.

MAX PAYNE 2: FALL OF MAX PAYNE 84%

■ PC, PS2, Xbox ■ Rockstar ■ £34.99

Yet more hard-nosed, stylish shooting shenanighans with Bullet Time and amnesia as Max scores again. PC and Xbox versions are let down by slow frame rates and long loading on PS2.

MAX PAYNE 89%

■ GBA ■ Rockstar ■ £29.99

Handheld remake shoes in much that made Max's first crim-capping caper so classy, from the John Woo slo-mo gunning and noir narrative to the blood and gore.

METROID PRIME 93%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £19.99

Classic platformer melded with first-person shooter into a totally unique-feeling actioner that's perfectly paced, heavily atmsopheric and hard!

METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE 81%

■ PS2, Xbox, PC ■ Konami ■ £39.99

Sons Of Liberty gets a remix. Now with more Snake and less of that albino fop. Makes you wonder why they didn't do it right the first time. Helped define the stealth genre, but the plot is quite nuts.

METAL GEAR SOLID: TWIN SNAKES 89%

■ GC ■ Konami ■ £39.99

Snake has snuffed Sons Of Liberty, stolen it's clothes and stuffed the limp corpse of its plot into a foot-locker, time-warping back to his PSone classic.

SINGSTAR 81%

■ PS2 ■ Sony ■ £39.99

The PS2-owning world is split into two halves – those who want to sing songs on their favourite console, and those who'd rather eat their own testicles fried up in a sauce of their own pish. It's glorified karaoke, but what's clever here is that SingStar measures your singing against the notes of the song and scores you according to how closely you performed. Making it kind of like a real game requiring real skill. Only one that, due to a limited selection of tracks and the fact it's singing, will appeal to a real niche – and even then just for a fairly short time.

"YOU CAN SING MY SONGS BUT GET YOUR HANDS OFF MY JUMPSUIT YOU MOFO STALKER"

NBA STREET 2 83%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA Sports ■ £39.99

Basketball goes back to the street... again. Fast, funky, full of neat tricks and fantastic commentary, Street 2 really does capture the feel of the sport perfectly.

NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 91%

■ PS2, Xbox, PC, GameCube ■ EA ■ £39.99

A blinding racer for anyone that loves attaching spinning rims and kitting their motor out with a booming sound system. Everyone, then!

POKEMON COLOSSEUM 90%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99

Half the planet's gamers want to see the little critters crucified then skinned alive, but the rest will love the new mix of scrapping and adventuring.

POKEMON PINBALL RUBY/SAPPHIRE 86%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

The best pinball game ever, it's dead clever the way it combines collecting the furry critters with frantically slapping your Pokéball with your flippers. Ack ack!

PRINCE OF PERSIA: SANDS OF TIME 89%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, PC ■ Ubisoft ■ £39.99

Ace platformer that likes to get all Craig David with a fancy "Can I get a rewind?" time-travel feature.Looks luverly, but a bit short and buggy too.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3 95%

■ PS2, PC ■ Konami ■ £39.99

Best football game on the planet. What more do you want us to say? Oh yeah... no real players. Well, we've all gotta have some dreams, right?

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2 93%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

Street racing thrills in sumptuous looking cities with awesome Xbox Live support too. Bit of a slow-burner till you've got some cool cars.

RAINBOW SIX 3 84%

■ PS2, Xbox ■ UbiSoft ■ £39.99

Great squad-based tactical shooter that feels more realistic than other games in this arena. You'll look a twat wearing that headset to talk to people though. PS2's outing is the weakest, too.

SOULCALIBUR 2 88%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA/Nintendo ■ £39.99

Looks great but weak AI makes one-player too easy and the fighting system just isn't deep enough to last in multiplayer. We prefer Virtua Fighter.

SSX 3 85%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ EA ■ £39.99

The ultimate boarding thrill-ride, SSX 3 is more open-ended as you wrack up the points exploring three huge mountains looking for the phattest air.

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW 94%

■ Xbox, PC ■ Ubisoft ■ £39.99

Sam slaps on his night-perving goggles and pokes his optic cable into loads more crevices in this stealth sequel masterpiece. Genius multiplayer.

STAR WARS: KOTOR 88%

■ Xbox, PC ■ Activision ■ £39.99

Star Wars gets a AAA game, with cool weapons and skills plus a genius fighting system. More fun than waxing a wookie – but just as beardy.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 89%

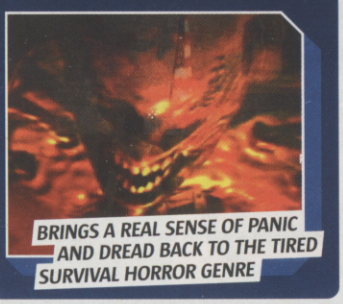
■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube, PC ■ EA Sports ■ £39.99

Someone should have told Siegfried and Roy that there are easier ways to tame a tiger. This is the Gran Turismo of golf games – it's that good!

THE SUFFERING 84%

■ PS2 ■ Midway ■ £39.99

Survival horror with a viciously visceral and violent vibe. Who needs methodical puzzle-solving when all you want to do is fill nightmarish freaks full of holes? Plays more like a first-person shooter but still manages to be one of the scariest and most disturbing games we've played in ages.



BRINGS A REAL SENSE OF PANIC AND DREAD BACK TO THE TIRED SURVIVAL HORROR GENRE

TIMESPLITTERS 2 91%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ Eidos ■ £19.99

Comedy time-travelling shooter with great levels and wicked multiplayer modes. If you loved GoldenEye on N64, snap this up.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2 91%

■ Xbox, PC ■ Codemasters ■ £39.99

So many different types of racing in one perfectly polished package – they feel genuinely different and are all genuinely good. A real must-have.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 79%

■ PS2, Xbox, GameCube ■ Activision ■ £39.99

The weakest game in the series, but Tony's still the chairman of the board when it comes to skating on your console. Made us wish Jackass' Bam Margera would do his own videogame.

TOP SPIN 83%

■ Xbox ■ Microsoft ■ £39.99

"Anyone that says Virtua Tennis is better cannot be serious. Wedge a racket up their ass and make them play this, that'll learn 'em real good". A direct quote from CVG's Grazza, no less.

TRANSFORMERS 88%

■ PS2 ■ Atari ■ £39.99

First- and third-person mech-mashing mayhem with a light oiling of tactical depth that's still a blast even if you think Transformers are a pile of old toss.

VIEWTIFUL JOE 89%

■ GameCube ■ Capcom ■ £39.99

A kung-fu fighting superhero crimefighter with more Bullet Time tricks than the whole Matrix trilogy. Crazy, unique and very cool – viewtiful even!

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4 EVOLUTION 93%

■ PS2 ■ Sega ■ £39.99

Tekken 4? Parp! Virtua Fighter 4 is where the big boys play. This is the current pinnacle of 3D beat 'em ups. Just a pity Akira looks like Peter Andre.

WARIO WARE INC. 88%

■ GBA ■ Nintendo ■ £29.99

Mini-game nirvana in one of the smartest, most devious and addictive games ever. The pleasure of slicing steaks and picking noses is intense, but over too soon.

WWE SMACKDOWN! HCTP 87%

■ PS2 ■ THQ ■ £39.99

The series gets bigger and better each year and now you can play Bra and Panties matches avec the laydeez – it's the best wrestling game ever!

LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER 95%

■ GameCube ■ Nintendo ■ £39.99

Absorbing graphics and captivating gameplay, mini Orlando Bloom Link will pull you in faster than Jordan's yo-yo knickers go up and down.

Do you agree with CVG? If you think there's something missing, write it and let us know. mailbag.cvg@dennis.co.uk

NEW ENTRIES

NINJA GAIDEN

Xbox is nabbing some ace new games right now, and Tecmo's title tops the lot. Beware though, it's so hard we had to take turns helping to finish it.

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

Nicely merges story and racing – it's the first time in the history of the series that there've actually been queues in CVG's shack to play a TOCA game.

GALLEON

We know what you're thinking, 'cos we thought that too – till we played it. Then we started gushing like a cannonball hole in a, erm, galleon.

DROP-OUTS

TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA

Been there, seen that, killed everything that moved, got the T-shirt, relocated to San Andreas.

SIM CITY 4

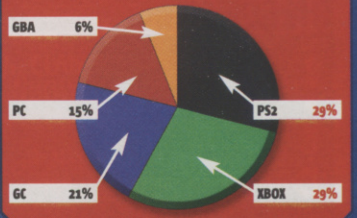
Great for megalomaniacs, but we had to uninstall it to make room for our Perimeter review. Bah.

GRAN TURISMO 3

Look, we've got Prologue already and GT4 is just around the next bend. A little pit stop is in order.

FORMAT FACE-OFF

Xbox finally catches up with PS2 in CVG's Big 50 chart this month. Here's the full breakdown...



BEST AND WORST OF THE LAST 3MONTHS

Missed an issue of CVG and want to know what the reviews highlights and lowlights were? Here you go...

NINJA GAIDEN	
XBOX	93%
GALLEON	
XBOX	92%
HITMAN: CONTRACTS	
PS2, XBOX, PC	78%
CY GIRLS	
PS2	66%
ENGLAND INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL	
PS2, XBOX	56%

FAR CRY	
PC	91%
POKEMON COLOSSEUM	
GC	90%
PROJECT ZERO 2	
PS2	86%
METROID: ZERO MISSION	
GBA	84%
GLASS ROSE	
PS2	18%

SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW	
XB, PC	94%
METAL GEAR SOLID: TWIN SNAKES	
GC	89%
RAINBOW SIX 3	
PS2	84%
FINAL FANTASY CRYSTAL CHRONICLES	
GC	68%
THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004	
PS2	36%

NURSE CVG'S BIG TIPS

The Surgery is Open! Drop everything and grab your joypads, Nurse CVG is in the house!

It's been a messy month in the Surgery. You should have seen the state of some of the patients I had in here pained by The Suffering. Absolutely minging with blood and guts, they were. I'm still trying to get the fluids out of my uniform.

And then loads of people turned up sliced like cheap chips from getting diced in Way Of The Samurai 2 and Onimusha: Blade Warriors. Luckily, I know my way around game gashes, so they got stitched up and shipped out quickly.

But that was nothing compared to the steady stream of battered faces from Fight Night 2004. Not that I'm an expert on boxing or anything but I think the idea is not to get punched in the face. I'll hook you up with all the unlockables, but you've got to do the fisting yourself. Alright, let's try and keep it a bit cleaner next month. See you then.

Creamy Love, Nurse CVG XXX

THE SUFFERING

PS2, XBOX

Set in jail, this. Reminds me of that show on telly, Bad Girls, although that's got more beasts in it.

PS2

At any time while playing, hold R1 + L1 + ⊗ and enter these codes:

- *Acid Mode* ← ← R2 → → R2 ↑ ↑ R2 ↓ ↓ R2
- *New family picture* ↑ → ↑ → ↑ → R2
- *Hell's depths* ↑ ↑ ↑ → → →
- *Direction wizard* ← → ↓ → R2 ← ↑ ←
- *Fade to black* ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
- *Family picture dirty and wrinkled* ← ↓ ← ↓ ← ↓ R2
- *Full health* ↓ ↓ ↓ R2 ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑ R2 ↓ ↑ ↓ ← → ← R2 ↑ ← ↓ → ↑ → ↓ ← R2 ↓ ↓ ↓ R2 R2
- *All weapons and items (except for the Gonzo Gun)* ← R2 R2 R2 → ← → ← ↑ R2 R2 R2 ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ R2
- *Gonzo Gun* ↑ R2 ← R2 ↓ R2 → R2
- *Good old days Mode* ↓ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↑
- *Information hog* → ← ↑ ← R2 → ↓ →
- *Higher evil level* ← ← ↓ ↑
- *Lower good level* ↑ ↑ → ↑ ↑ ← ↓ → ↑
- *Overcome insanity* → → → R2 ← ← → ← R2
- *Current throw weapon ammo refill* ← ← ↑ ↓ → → → R2
- *Become the demon* ↑ ↓ ← →
- *Ickle friend mode* ↓ → ↑ ← ↓ R2 ← ← → → R2 ↓ ↑ ← → R2
- *Shotgun mayhem* ← ← ← ↓ ↓ ↓
- *Clean mode* ↓ ↑ → ←
- *Big bang* → → → ← ← ←
- *Full Xombium bottle* → → ↑ ↑ R2 ← → R2 → ↑ → R2

XBOX

At any time playing, hold L + R + X and enter these codes.

- *Grenades* Right, Right, Right, Right, Left, Left, A
- *Higher evil level* Left, Left, Down, Up, A
- *Molotovs* Down, Down, Down, Up, Up, Up, A
- *Current gun ammo refilled* Right, Right, Down, Up, Left, Right, Left, Left, A
- *Throw weapon ammo refilled* Left, Left, Up, Down, Right, Left, Right, Right, A

ONIMUSHA: BLADE WARRIORS

PS2

Hard Japanese guys poking each other with their weapons – hmmm!

- *Giramusaido* Get Level 3 with Musaido
- *Gogandantess* Complete Story mode with Kaede, Normal Soldier, Maeda Keijirou, and Samanosuke
- *Jaido* Get Level 2 with Normal Genma or Sword Foot Light
- *Jujudormah Ran* Complete Story mode with Jujudormah and get Level 3
- *Magoichi Saiga* Complete 200 battles in Versus mode
- *Marcellus Modify P* Get Level 2 with Marcellus
- *Marcellus Modify S* Get Level 3 with Marcellus
- *Megaman EXE* Complete Story mode with Samanosuke
- *Megaman EXE Bug* Get Level 3 with Megaman EXE
- *Megaman EXE Grand* Get Level 2 with Megaman EXE
- *Megaman Zero* Collect all three Zero-parts with Megaman EXE
- *Megaman Zero Proto* Get Level 2 with Megaman Zero
- *Megaman Zero Ultimate* Get Level 3 with Megaman Zero
- *Miyamoto Musashi* Complete Story mode with Normal Soldier and get Level 3
- *Musaido* Get Level 2 with Three Eye
- *Oda Nobunaga* Complete Story mode will the twelve default characters
- *Sasaki Kojirou* Complete Story mode with Miyamoto Musashi
- *Zero* Collect all three Zero-parts and defeat Zero in Versus mode

STAR TREK: SHATTERED UNIVERSE

PS2

Star Trek? I'll never ride on Kirk's Enterprise – his Klingons are minging. Here's how to get all the unlockables.

- *All Medals and Ranks* L1 R1 L1 ● R1 △ L1 SEL
- *All Missions* R1 L1 ●■ L1 R1 △ SEL
- *All Ships* L1 ■ L1 ■ R1 R1 ● SEL
- *Invincibility* L1 ● L1 R1 △△● SEL
- *Kobayashi Maru difficulty level* L1 △ L1 L1 ■△ R1 SEL

WAY OF THE SAMURAI 2

PS2

More dudes boasting about their prowess with their giant choppers. I'll be the judge of that!

Pause the game and enter these:

- *500 mon*

NURSE CVG'S TIP OF THE MONTH

FIGHT NIGHT 2004

PS2, XBOX

I went out with a boxer once. It was true boxing g-love. He was very good with his fists but had a face like a bulldog licking pish off a nettle. Here's codes so the same doesn't happen to you. Select My Corner on the main menu and enter these codes for PS2.

PS2

- *All arenas* ← ← → → → ← → →
- *Big heads* ← → ← → ← ←
- *Midget Mode* ← → ← →
- *Unlock Big Tigger* Choose Record Book, then Most Wins Boxer, then press ↑ ↑

XBOX

- *All arenas* Left, Left, Left, Right, Right, Right, Left, Right, Right
- *Big heads* Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left
- *Midget Mode* Left, Right, Left, Right, Left
- *Unlock Big Tigger* Choose Record Book, then Most Wins Boxer, then press Up twice

Hold L1 + L2, and press
◀◀▲▼▼▲●
Complete heal
Hold L1 + R1, and press
▼▲▶◀▼▲●
Refresh stamina
Hold L2 + R2 and press
▶◀▶◀▼▼●

PAINKILLER

PC

This guy is clearly not a trained Nurse. He uses big stakes as painkillers, which is wrong. Aspirin is better.

In Daydream or Insomnia mode, hit ~ to bring down the console, and enter these codes.

Full ammo .....PKAMMO
Full ammo/health .....PKPOWER
All weapons .....PKWEAPONS
Get pots of gold .....PKGOLD
Demon morph mode .....PKDEMON
Enemies one health ..PKWEAKENEMIES
Big blood and guts .....PKALWAYSGIB
Toggles god mode .....PKGOD
Toggles haste .....PKHASTE

DISGAEA: HOUR OF DARKNESS

PS2

Dis guy I know told me these nine unlockable secret classes and what you need to unlock them.

Angel
A Cleric, a Knight and an Archer all of level 100 or higher, and all female.

Archer
Level 3, or higher in Bow Weapon Mastery.

EDF Soldier
Level 30, or higher, in Gun Weapon Mastery.

Knight
A level 10 mage, and a level 10 warrior, both of level 10 or higher.

Majin
A male warrior, brawler, ninja, rogue and scout, all of level 200 or higher.

Ninja
A male fighter and a male warrior of level 20 or higher.

Rogue
A fighter and a warrior, both of level 5 or higher.

Ronin
A female warrior and a female fighter with a total level (EG: 5 + 15, 3 + 17, etc) of 20 or higher.

Scout
Two fighters and two warriors of level 5 or higher.

SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

PC

I've had several female readers sharing their Sam Fisher fetishes with me – here's how to get to his private bits on the PC version.

Open <wherever you installed it>\Ubisoft\splintercellpandoratomorrow\offline\SplinterCell2user.ini with a text editor, and under engine.input, change one of the key bindings to one of these codes (EG: U = invincible 1 to turn on invincible by pressing U)

Freeze all Enemies .....playersonly
Gives health .....health
God mode on .....invincible 1
God mode off .....invincible 0
Kill all enemies .....killpawns
Ammo .....more ammo
No clip mode on .....ghost
No clip mode off .....walk
Invisibility .....invisible 1

KING OF FIGHTERS 2000/01

PS2

All sorts of unlockables to keep you fisting away.

2000 UNLOCKABLES

Intros from the original KoFs:

King Of Fighters 94
Get a playing time of 10 hours

King Of Fighters 95
Perform a 30 hit combo in practice mode

King Of Fighters 96
In practice mode, set your opponent's recovery to Quick and deplete their health

King Of Fighters 97
Beat single player mode with 200 or more ability points

King Of Fighters 98
Beat Team Mode with 300 or more ability points

King Of Fighters 99
Clear any mode at level 8 difficulty

2001 UNLOCKABLES

In party mode

Arcade Stage – Korea.....Beat 40 People
Arcade Stage – Japan.....Beat 50 People
Arcade Stage – China.....Beat 60 People
Arcade Stage – America..Beat 70 People
Arcade Stage – Brazil.....Beat 80 People
Arcade Stage – Italy.....Beat 90 People
Arcade Stage – Mexico..Beat 100 People
Arcade Stage – Zero.....Beat 110 People
Arcade Stage – Igniz ....Beat 120 People
Zero .....Defeat 150 People

Outside of Party Mode

Glugan.....Defeat 10 People
Igniz .....Defeat 200 People
Krizalid....(As a Striker) Defeat 30 People
Ron .....(As a Striker) Defeat 20 People

TOP 20 TIPS

EVERY BEST-SELLER TIPPED!

1 SONIC HEROES

PS2, XBOX, GC

Complete Last Story in story mode to unlock the last cinema.

2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP RUGBY

PS2, XBOX, PC

Big head mode: win the Tri Nations. Classic Match 9: win the world Cup. The Cougars: win the Five Nations.

3 NORTON INTERNET SECURITY 2004

PC

If you're in a games shop and see someone buying this, kick 'em in the knackers and tell to stop messing up my tips chart.

4 TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

PC, XBOX

As the merc in multiplayer mode, always place trip-lasers at eye level on the computer consoles – the spy will automatically stand up after hacking it, and thus blow himself up.

5 JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

PS2, XBOX, GC

Get 19 platinums, and then enter this code when pause to get unlimited battery: **PS2:** ●■●●▲. **GC:** X,B,X,B,Y.

6 FIFA 2004

GC, PS2, XBOX

Beat all teams in the German Bundesliga to unlock third kits.

7 LMA MANAGER 2004

PS2, XBOX

Enter your name as LMA2004B to stop human teams ageing.

8 THIS IS FOOTBALL 2004

PC

Don't bother with sliding tackles unless you're positive you'll win the ball. The ref'll give almost any foul a card.

9 THE CAT IN THE HAT

PS2, XBOX

To receive 10 magic pick-ups, press in these codes when paused: **PS2:** L1 ▼ L1 L2 ●▼▲▼▲▲. **XBOX:** Left Thumb Stick In, D-Pad Down, Left Thumb Stick In, D-Pad Right, D-Pad Left, D-Pad Down, D-Pad Up, D-Pad Down, D-Pad Up, D-Pad Up.

10 THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

PS2, XBOX, GC

Hold the shoulder buttons, and press these codes to make yourself jump whenever you press the horn. **GC:** X, X, X, Y. **PS2:** ●●●▲. **XBOX:** X, X, X, Y.

11 NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND

PS2, XBOX, GC

To unlock all drag tracks, enter these codes at the main menu: **PS2:** ◀●◀ R1 ● L1 L2 R2. **XBOX:** Right, X, Left, R, X, L, White, Black.

12 FAR CRY

PC

Enter $0, $1, $2, $3, $4, and $5 to your name at random places to change the colours of your letters in multiplayer games.

13 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

PS2, XBOX, GC

Enter CANYOUPICKONE as password to unlock all the golfers.

14 THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT

PS2, XBOX, GC

Enter in these codes to make a gnome appear in your garden who will give all the objects: **PS2:** R2 L1 R1 L2 ◀● then L2 R2 ▲L3. **XBOX:** L, Black, Right, Blue, Left, and then Black, Up, Y, Down, R. **GC:** Down, L, Z, R, Left, Right, then Down, Z, Left, Right, R.

15 SCOOBY-DOO MYSTERY MAYHEM

PS2, XBOX, GC, GBA

To beat the last boss, use the Tome Of Doom and sidestep him every time he charges at you. Easy!

16 TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

PS2

On the main menu, press START , and then enter this code for a mission select: L1 R2 L2 R1 ◀▶●●.

17 THE LORD OF THE RINGS: RETURN OF THE KING

PS2, GC, XBOX

To give Gimli 1000 experience, pause the game and hold all of the shoulder buttons, then press: **PS2:** ●●▲✕. **XBOX:** B, B, Y, A. **GC:** B, B, Y, A.

18 WORMS 3D

XBOX, PS2, GC

Complete shotgun challenge 3 to unlock the banana bomb.

19 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

PS2, XBOX, GC

To open up a bonus course, enter in this code at the password screen: **PS2 and GC:** LSMMS.

20 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

PS2, XBOX, GC

To unlock the original Prince of Persia room, enter this code on the balcony you start on. **PS2:** L3 and enter ✕■▲●▲✕●. **GC:** Plug a second controller into slot 4, and enter this code on slot 1: A, B, Y, X, Y, A, B, X.

SHOW US YOUR TIPS!

BEST TIPS FROM THE BEST GAMERS AROUND: YOU!

I'm glad I've given out my text number to you all. It's lovely to hear the crazy insane ramblings of winky-wacking mentalists, be seduced by filthy txt-spk, and get propositioned with sweet questions like "R U SINGLE?"

'Course I'm single. The Surgery is my partner and I devote every moment to caressing your tips and healing all your gaming ills. Speaking of, this month Show Us Your Tips is spurting with hot cheat squirts for TOCA 2, Manhunt, and Splinter Cell: PT, and my First Aid box is packed with games like with Hitman: Contracts and Fire Emblem.

Love, Nurse CVG xxx

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

XBOX, PC

Got myself a couple of passwords for TOCA 2 that I thought you might like. To unlock all the Championships enter CHAMPS at the Bonus screen. To unlock all the Championships for Xbox Live enter XCHAMPS.

Barry, Belfast

***CVG** You can slip that tip into my exhaust pipe any time you like, Barry.*

MANHUNT

PC

Don't mess with me CVG, I've been cutting people up, stoving heads in with hammers and suffocating dudes with plastic bags for weeks now and I'm still on the loose. Oh yeah, I've played a bit of PC Manhunt too, so here's some nice codes to unlock some cool game modes. You'll need to have got Five Stars in the episodes stated before they work, then type them in on the title screen:

- *URUNFAST* Runner Mode (scenes 1+2)
- *ALLRDEAF* Silence Mode (scenes 3+4)
- *HEALBACK* Energy regenerates (scenes 5+6)
- *THEYBOOM* Exploding Hunters (scenes 7+8)
- *UGOTARMS* All weapons (scenes 9+10)
- *UHITHARD* Hardcore punches (scenes 11+12)
- *BUNYSUIT* Rabbit skin (scenes 13+14)
- *HELLSUIT* Monkey skin (scenes 15+16)
- *EVILEYES* You're invisible (scenes 17+18)
- *PIGGSUIT* Piggsy skin (scenes 19+20)

Fred, Manchester

***CVG** I play Manhunt all the time myself, usually down Hollywood's Disco on Fridays.*

NINJA GAIDEN

XBOX

Oh my God, this game is rock hard. Would love it if you could send me some tips, and in return I'll show you this: if you hold A as you run into water you'll keep running and never run out of breath. Don't let go of A, though, or you'll start losing energy.

David, email

***CVG** Able to hold your breath when you go down? Underwater, that is? Quite a skill... Anyway, check out First Aid for some more Gaiden gear!*

DEAD MAN'S HAND

XBOX, PC

Yee-har, howdy-doodle cowgirl? I done got maself this here tip for Dead Man's Hand. If you hold down them there shoulder buttons on your joypad when you highlight New Game on the main menu you've just done bagged yourself some extra ammo. Sheeit, that's some good shootin'!

Hank, email

***CVG** Thanks for that, I love to hear a good Welsh accent.*

THE SUFFERING

PS2, XBOX, PC

Loving The Suffering's messed-up scariness, but this little glitch I found makes it a bit easier to stomach. If you let your flashlight run out of batteries then save the game and reload it, the batteries will have mysteriously charged and won't ever run out!

Chris, email

***CVG** I'm a bit afraid of the dark too – I prefer it with the lights on...*

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR

XBOX, PC

I know you've already given out a few tips on Invisible War but I came across this little beaut. To jump really high, run towards a low object like stairs or a seat and just as your character begins to climb up the object press jump. You should be able to go way higher than usual!

Anthony, Derby

***CVG** I seem to be able to get the CVG boys to jump for me whenever I ask. Nice lads.*

LIFE SAVER

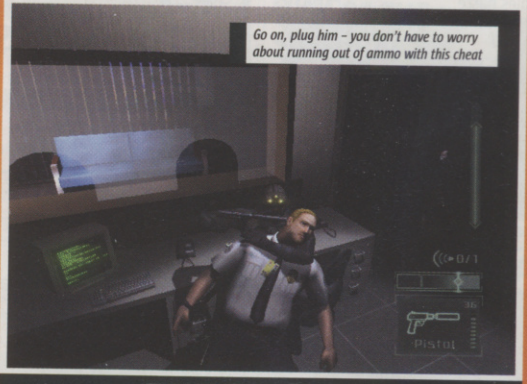
SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW

XBOX

Thanks for your Splinter Cell: PT guide, it rocked and made the game much easier for me. In return I thought I'd pass this code along. To get every item and have infinite ammo in the single-player game just tap in Up, Down, Left, Right, Right, Left, Down, Up at the main menu screen. Even easier now, eh?

Gordo, Inverness

***CVG** I hear Sam Fisher's good at doing the splits. I'd certainly let him have a go at mine.*



FLATLINER

MTX: MOTOTRAX

PS2, Xbox

Hey baby, I've got a little tip for MTX: Mototrax. If you enter J?H345 in the password screen you'll get super-fast acceleration on your bikes. Now Nurse CVG, what do I get from you in return?

Emil, Canterbury

***CVG** Well, Emil, telling me your tip is little isn't the best way to chat me up. How about a deep rectal exam?*

CVG FIRST AID KIT

Your every desire indulged by Nurse CVG... except that one, obviously

GHOST RECON: JUNGLE STORM

PS2

Help! I'm stuck! I can't get to the later missions and I need the practice for online!

Karl, email

***CVG** Big Al is the man for this. Trust me, he's stormed my jungle many a time and knows what he's doing...*

✷ *Unlock all Missions*
Play a Support Troop on the Cuban Operation. Pause, enter: OOOOLK then M and N at once.

✷ *Six-on-six action*
Pressing MMMOOOO at the Press Start screen.

PLASTER OVER YOUR PAIN

NINJA GAIDEN

XBOX

We've had loads of requests for help with Tecmo's rock-hard ninja 'em up, so here's a few more codes and hints we scooped out of Matt (our resident Gaiden expert).

✷ *Breathe Underwater*
You can breathe underwater and stay submerged for as long as you like by doing this nifty little move. As you hit the water, tap A to run across the surface. Keep tapping the button until you hit a wall and sink. As long as you keep hammering away at A when you hit the bottom you won't lose any health from being underwater! Ninja!

✷ *Skip to last boss*
You can skip to the final boss on level 16 by getting beaten by the boss, going back to pick up the Dark Dragon Blade, then pressing START during the cutscene. Sha, and indeed, zam!

✷ *Turning Japanese*
One more thing: if you really want the true Ninja Gaiden experience you can play the original Japanese versions by changing the text and subtitles to Japanese from the Options menu. Now you're well hardcore!

CLEAN UP YOUR GAMING WOUNDS

SWORD OF MANA

GBA

I've heard that there are a few hidden features in Sword of Mana, but I can't seem to find anything out of the ordinary. What's up?

Lemar, London

***CVG** Grazza's the master swordsman in the CVG office, and I see him every month for our 'special' meetings. This from him:*

✷ Killing a certain type of enemy 1000 times turns every one of that type into a Black version. They're stronger than regular versions and take much more punishment, but they drop Crystal Ores when they die like Claudio Ranieri drops million-pound strikers.

✷ Niccolo's got a special part of his ring reserved for long-term customers. To access it you have to make 250 separate purchases from him, so make sure you exit his shop and go back in every time you buy something. Once it's unlocked, you'll be able to buy stuff to forge!

✷ Finally, if you leave the game running when it says 'Fin' at the end of the game you'll eventually be rewarded with a wee Chocobo cutscene!

THIS MONTH'S KISS OF LIFE

HITMAN CONTRACTS

PS2, XBOX, PC

Who'd have thought killing people would be so tricky? Your walkthrough for Hitman: Contracts was brilliant but I'm still struggling to ace some of the missions. Any extra tips you could give me?

Ian, email

***CVG** I thought Mike was playing with his little bald man an awful lot, but then I realised he was doing a Hitman guide. Here's some extra tips he slipped me:*

✷ It's easier to kill everybody when you're packing a bullet-spitting mini-gun or twin Desert Eagles made from gold. Here's how you get 'em!

✷ In The Wang Fou Incident (Level 9), go into the restaurant. Take the first floor elevator to the basement. Fight through the tunnels, into the elevator at the end, up to the mansion and use your night-vision goggles to get to the office on the second floor. Grab Orthmeyer's Keycard from the desk, then head back to the restaurant and finish the level as normal.

✷ Exit the game and restart Mission 1. There are two rooms you can access with your new Keycard, one on the first floor containing the mini-gun and one in the basement containing twin golden Desert Eagles. That's firepower!

BALLS-OUT CHEAT BANDAGE

Contracts is pretty tricky in places, so what you need is some added firepower. Nurse CVG's got the scoop...

✷ *Silent Assassin Rating*
To complete the mission with Silent Assassin rating enter this code during gameplay:
PS2 R2 L2 ↑ ↓ ✕ L3 ● ✕ ● ✕
XBOX R, L, Up, Down, X, A, Left Thumbstick, B, A, B, A

✷ *Access Level Select*
To access level select enter this code at the main menu screen:
PS2 ■ △ ● ← ↑ → L2 R2
XBOX X, Y, B, Left, Up, Right, L, R

✷ *Unlockables*
Here's the weapons you'll unlock be achieving a Silent Assassin rating:

Weapon	*Mission*
CZ 2000 Dual Pistols	Mission 1
Micro Uzi Dual Sub Machine-guns	Mission 2
Silverballer Silenced Dual Pistols	Mission 3
Magnum 500 Dual Pistols	Mission 4
Sawed-Off Shotgun Dual	Mission 5
M4 Carbine Silenced Assault Rifle	Mission 6
SG220 .S Dual Pistols	Mission 7
MP5 Silenced Sub Machine-gun	Mission 8
AK 74 Silenced Assault Rifle	Mission 9
GK 17 Dual Pistols	Mission 10
Micro Uzi Silenced Dual Sub Machine-guns	Mission 11
PGM Silenced Sniper Rifle	Mission 12

SURGERY IS ALWAYS OPEN!

Nurse CVG is waiting for your tip. Seriously, she told us she really fancied you. No, honest. She totally loves you. Send your tips, cheats, strategies and questions to the email address below. You know you want to...

TEXT 4 TIPS

TEXT YOUR TIP TO: 83125
(SAME FOR T-MOBILE USERS)

How to enter: first type 'CVG TIPS' and then enter your hint, tip or strategy. Make sure you tell us the name of the game and what format the tip is for!

TEXTS COST 50P PLUS STANDARD OPERATING CHARGE. SEE PAGE 110 FOR TERMS & CONDITIONS.

CVGTIPS@DENNIS.CO.UK

TEXT TO WIN

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(SAME FOR T-MOBILE USERS)

How to enter: first type 'CVG ONI' or 'CVG EURO' and then the letter matching your answer. Eg: 'CVG ONI B'*

*TEXTS COST 50P PLUS STANDARD OPERATING CHARGE

AWESOME ONIMUSHA PRIZES!

Slice and dice your way to sweet Samurai success!

How do you beat up an ancient Japanese swordsman? Punch 'im in the Samur-eye! Who'd have though you could have so much fun with Samurais?

But trust us, you can. The Onimusha series has always been the pinnacle of Samurai pleasure, and Oni 3 is gonna be the best yet. We've already raved about it in our review and awarded it a smokin' 93%. Why? 'Cos the demon dicing and big-hitting beastie blasting takes the series to a whole new level of Samurai sweetness. And Paris, which is also nice.

So to celebrate the release of Oni 3 we've hooked up with our honourable brothers at Capcom to bring you a prize that'll make you mess your armour-plated pants. Sure, a PS2 is ace and a back catalogue of Onimusha games means you can experience every last second of the legendary series, but what's really going to make you crap your keks is the encounter with a real-life Samurai.

For real. Two lucky winners will get loadsa tickets to Thorpe Park so they can take on the might of The Samurai, the theme park's newest and most puke-inducing ride. It's like being strapped to a shuriken chucked really hard by a really massive man – scary, but awesome!

SPIN ON THAT

Fancy tackling a warrior that shows no mercy? Then brave the force of the mighty Samurai and prepare your stomach for battle on Thorpe Park's gut-wrenching, stomach-churning, shell-shocking spinning machines.

If you don't win CVG's slick prize but like the sound of it, satisfy your twisted cravings at Thorpe Park and face the mighty Samurai, or Nemesis Inferno, the legendary feet-free coaster and the world's first ten-looping roller coaster, Colossus. Visit www.thorpepark.com or call 0870 444 44 66 for more details or to book now.

WAGON WHEELY GOOD GEAR!

Eat Wagon Wheels, Play Football, Win the European Championship!

Summer's funny when you're into games. You want to be outside playing footie and looking at girls' bare legs, but you can't drag yourself away from your console. And they've only organised the European Championship to kick off on June 12!

We've got the answer: we've teamed up with Wagon Wheels to offer one lucky winner the chance to score a PS2, a copy of EA's UEFA Euro 2004 game, £500 worth of sports vouchers plus a delicious case of Wagon Wheels and Limited Edition Topps England 2004 Collector Cards! So you can stay inside and play some games then head outside for some exercise in your sweet new threads! AND nine runners up will win £100 worth of sports vouchers and a case of Wagon Wheels complete with collector cards!

Don't get booked for time-wasting – send us your answer and you could be playing EA's Euro 2004 on your new PS2, chomping some Wagon Wheels, and styling up the pitch in your new sports gear!

CARD HAPPY

There are four Topps England 2004 Collector Cards to start your collection free with this issue of CVG. Each card features pictures and vital statistics of the England team. There are 16 cards to collect in total, so don't go into extra time – start collecting now.

You'll find two cards in every six pack of Wagon Wheels Originals and Wagon Wheels Jammies and four cards in the eight and 12 packs, available at most major supermarkets. For more info, check out: www.wagonwheels.com

WIN ALL THIS!

* **First Prize:** One lucky winner scoops a PS2, all three of the Onimusha games including the latest, Demon Siege, and SIX tickets to Thorpe Park so you can take all your mates on the new Samurai ride!
* **Second Prize:** One second prize winner walks off with all three Onimusha games and 4 tickets to Thorpe Park so you too can take on the Samurai!
* **Three Runners-Up:** Win all three Onimusha games!

ONIMUSHA 3 COMPO QUESTION

Legendary samurai Samanosuke's new mate Jacques doesn't just kick le arse beaucoup.

Mais non, he's also got a lot in common with Thorpe Park's own Samurai ride – because they've both got a killer whip! Tell us which one of these screenshots shows Jacques whipping up a frenzy and you're in with a chance of winning! Coupon's below or text us yer answer.

Sacre crikey! There's loads of crazy demon-beasts descending on Paris, and only Sam stand in their way!

Holy merdoli! Jacques and his whip have been teleported back to le feudal Japan!

Ooh-la-look at the size of that tres grand retro robo o' death! Can Sam take it down with his sword?

ONIMUSHA COMPETITION

Tick one of the following boxes

A.☐ B.☐ C.☐

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* **First Place:** PlayStation 2, copy of Euro 04, £500 of sports vouchers and a case of Wagon Wheels and Topps England 2004 Cards inside.
* **Nine Runners-Up:** £100 worth of sports vouchers and a case of Wagon Wheels with cards!

WAGON WHEELS COMPO QUESTION

The England Collector's Cards bundled with Wagon Wheels show all the top English stars – the very guys you'll be able to lead to glory in Electronic Art's UEFA Euro 2004!

All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning is tell us which screenshot the England lads appear in! Send your answer on the right-hand coupon above or text us (see top left box).

Hold on, Scotland aren't in Euro 2004! Well, they are in Graeme's dreams...

The Swedes grab their Ballacks as Germany's premier ball-thumper lines one up

Can you do a Sven and whip these likely lads into net-bursting European Champions?

www.computerandvideogames.com

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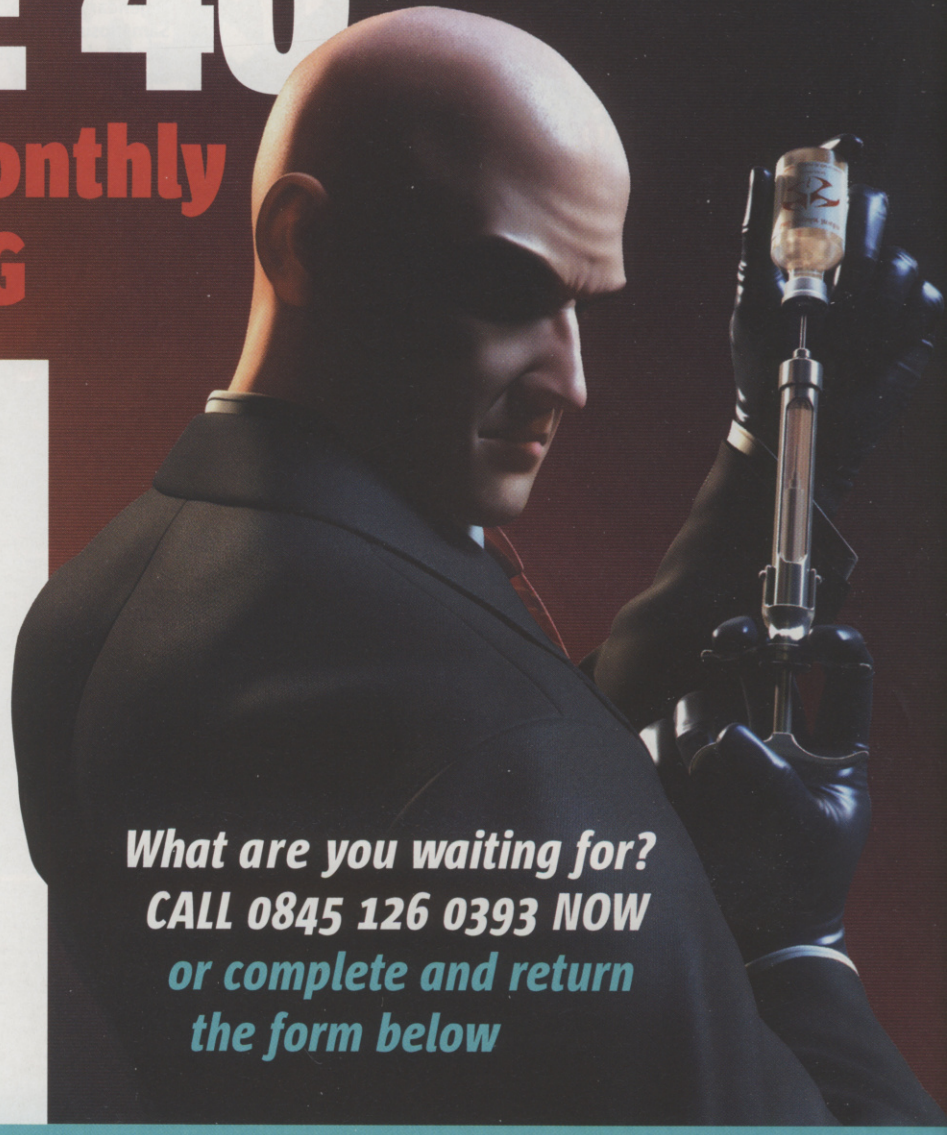

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It's judgement day! Make sure you don't miss CVG's giant review of this Summer's blockbusting street thriller on PS2 and Xbox

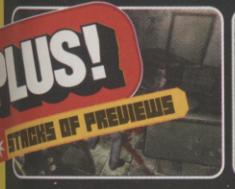
SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMMOROW

Sam Fisher finally tiptoes onto PS2. But can he fire up as much excitement on Sony's killer console? Get the first verdict in CVG!

ATHENS 2004

We crack open the Vaseline and talc up our tender bits for the definitive review of Sony's Olympic sportster

PLUS! STACKS OF PREVIEWS



SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM

Hands-on with the latest instalment of Konami's killer creep 'em up series – is it nip-stiffeningly, pube-straighteningly good?

PIKMIN 2

We loved the last one, but it was too damn short. Will Miyamoto's mini masterpiece go the distance or go to pot?

SECOND SIGHT

All-new stealthy psychic shooter from the developer behind TimeSplitters and the publisher behind Flashpoint? 'Ave it!

PLUS!

GOBBLE UP THESE TASTY REVIEWS! Sudeki, Shadow Ops: Red Mercury, Shellshock: Nam '67, Richard Burns Rally, Samurai Jack, Legends Of Wrestling: Showdown, Crimson Tears, Naval Ops: Commander, Spyro Fusion, Crash Bandicoot Fusion, Soldiers: Heroes Of World War II, Shrek 2

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COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES CVG

Contents subject to change without prior notice

10 YEARS AGO

COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY!

CVG is the world's first and best games magazine. But while the mag has always been a class act, games haven't always been as good as they are today...

1994

ISSUE 154

Ten years back E3 didn't exist so Sony used a toy show to kick-start PlayStation. How times have changed...

The year is 1994, and CVG is starting to get very excited about Sony and its PlayStation. But before you write in and complain about us being biased – no, we weren't then and we're not now.

See, ten years ago we were also getting excited about the Sega Saturn, Nintendo's 'Ultra 64', and even the Super Game Boy peripheral, with its promise of transforming dreary handheld carts into full-colour extravaganzas on your TV.

There was a lot to be excited about back then. Nintendo and Sega were still wowing us with SNES and Mega Drive games, Sega's 32X was on the horizon, the CD-i and 3DO looked like they might get a decent game each and even the PC Engine PC-FX and Neo Geo CD looked like becoming possible contenders. Whoop!

But then there was this console from Sony. It looked different – thinner than everything else – and we kept hearing impressive whispers about what it could do.

What the hell's this thing? Back in the summer of 1994 it was the future; Sony's critical first step into videogame domination

COUNT YOURSELF LUCKY

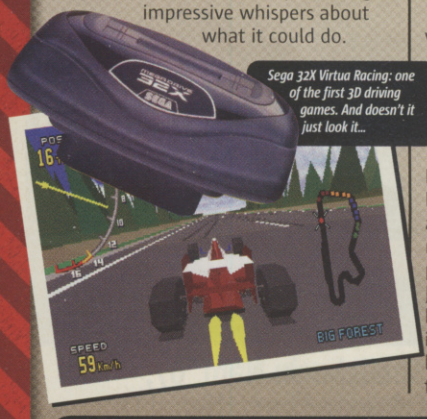
At least one review each month was accompanied with the phrase "the most perfect coin-op conversion ever". With coin-ops now almost gone the way of the dodo, it's not a phrase that will be returning to the mag any time soon...

So in the summer of 1994 we packed our bags and headed both East and West. We went to the Consumer Electronic Show in Chicago – that was when we got our first glimpse of the PlayStation.

There were no demos, no mention of polygons; just the machine, sat there doing nothing. But it was still exciting!

For issue 154 we also visited the Tokyo Toy Show. In hindsight this turned out to be the pivotal month when consumers sat up and took notice of Sony's machine. Until the Toy Show, the PlayStation was just an impressive bunch of figures. But suddenly, here was a deluge of product: arcade-perfect reproductions of 3D racers, quirky platformers and lots and lots of strange Japanese games that we knew would never make it out of Japan, but we loved and coveted them anyway.

CD-i launched badly. Is it surprising? We really don't want half-naked men with Vanilla Ice haircuts to sell us games



Sega 32X Virtua Racing: one of the first 3D driving games. And doesn't it just look it...

Ridge Racer on PlayStation. The most awesome arcade-perfect racer ever – for 1994, anyway

Then there was Namco's Ridge Racer, which left jaws on the floor when people first saw it. The publisher also showed off Star Blade Alpha and Cyber Sled, but who remembers them? With perfect polygons, growling engines and that silken-voiced announcer, Ridge Racer made Super Mario Kart look about as appealing as a large bowl of rotten mushrooms.

The Japanese press went crazy because of the show. Suddenly the PlayStation went from being an untested product to THE hot product of the moment. With only a few short months before the Japanese release, the anticipation just grew and grew.

Sure, Sony dreamt up more guerilla marketing for Europe – the forerunner of the ultra cool lifestyle stuff we see at E3 today. But with the show evolving into the pivotal gaming event in the world, we can't imagine Sony will ever again choose a toy show to kickstart the hype on it's newest hardware. And as E3 2004 proved, even self-professed toy firm Nintendo has learnt that lesson. ✷

MONKEY BUSINESS

Donkey Kong swings into action on CVG's cover a decade ago and he was about to swing in to save the SNES from the impending console shake-up.

The graphics for Donkey Kong Country weren't ahead of their time, they were simply far, far better than what anyone had expected from the SNES. By 1994, platform games had spread to epidemic proportions. A scan through issue 154 sees The Smurfs, Mickey Mouse, Sylvester & Tweety, The Lion King, Aladdin, The Jungle Book and Asterix games – and over 15 other side-scrolling platformers in one issue.

The 32- and 64-bit revolution quickly killed off the majority of 2D platformers with ropey licences, but Donkey Kong and its sequels kept Nintendo safe until its new console arrived.

BEST GAME #154

Mortal Kombat II 97%

Squeaking past the arcade review of Daytona USA by a solitary point, bah. Of course, MKII was far from Sub-Zero. Finish him!

WORST GAME #154

Desert Raid 10%

"You wouldn't want this even if it was free," says the brutal but very fair review. With hindsight, maybe we were being too generous...

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CHART TONES	MONO	POLY
Eamon - F**k It	149031	147890
Christina Milian - Dip It Low	151002	146307
Natasha Bedingfield - Single	151003	149891
Keane - Everybody's Changing	151004	149329
Ronan/ Leann - Last Thing On My..	151005	150811
D12 - My Band	149725	149355
Anastacia - Left Outside Alone	149210	149132
The Rasmus - In the Shadows	149400	146287
Maroon 5 - This Love	149900	149086
Streets - Fit But You Know It	150262	149334
Usher - Yeah	148960	146155
Busted - Air Hostess	150261	149304
Ash - Orpheus	151006	149893
Gunther /S'shine Girls-Ding Dong	151007	150092
Special D - Come With Me	149401	146306
McFly - 5 Colours In Her Hair	149257	149265
DJ Casper - Cha Cha Slide	148623	148627
Lostprophets - Wake Up Make a..	151008	151010
Boogie Pimps - Sunny	150264	149375
Gabrielle - Stay the Same	151009	151011

DANCE	MONO	POLY
Gia - Despina Vandi	140279	138348
Good Luck - Basement Jaxx	146054	143730
So Confused - 2play Ft Raghav	146159	146160
Somebody To Love-Boogie Pimps	144376	117101
Born Slippy Nuxx - Underworld	126478	116975
Fly On The Wings Of - Xtm & Dj	116215	118500
Make Luv - Room 5	111639	111643
Boys Of Summer - Dj Sammy	110321	110627
Logical Song - Scooter	102313	107043
Weekend - Scooter	112641	112592
Ur A Superstar - Love Inc	109977	107822
Rubberneckin - Elvis Presley	124657	124635
Who Said - Planet Funk	122492	121696
All In My Head - Kosheen	121730	121533
Golden Path -Chemical Brothers	124545	124338
Husan -Bhangra Knights	116956	116678

FOOTBALL	MONO	POLY
Arsenal - Vi-erra	122960	122961
Arsenal - Amazing Reds	122962	122963
Aston Villa -Holteenders In The Sky	122964	122965
Aston Villa - Roll Along	122966	122967
Chelsea - Blue Is The Colour	122984	122985
Chelsea - Super Franky Lampard	122986	122987
Chelsea - We are the famous CFC	122988	122989
Everton - He was Just 17	122990	122991
Everton - You Are My Everton	122992	122993
Leeds - We Had Joy	122998	122999
Liverpool - You'll Never Walk Alone	123006	123007
Liverpool - We All Live In A Red..	123008	123009
Man City - Blue Moon	123012	123013
Man United - Our Trophy Back	123016	123017
Man United - The Great Escape	123018	123019
Middlesborough - Boro Till I Die	123024	123025
Newcastle Utd - Blaydon Races	123026	123027
Newcastle Utd - 1 Alan Shearer	123028	123029
Southampton - Mr Eriksson	123034	123035
Southampton - When The Saints	123036	123037
Glory Glory	123038	123039
Spurs - We Are Tottenham	123040	123041
Wolves - King Kenny Miller	123042	123043
Wolves -Hey Jones 'E'	123044	123045
There's Only One....	123048	123049
We've Got That Double Feeling	123052	123053
Here We Go	123056	123057
Match Of The Day	123058	123059

OLD SKOOL	MONO	POLY
Let Me Be Your Fantasy - Baby D	-	116148
Rappers Delight - Sugarhill Gang	111774	111849
Hanging On A String - Loose Ends	111755	111830
Gotta Have Your Love - Mantronix	111764	111839
Cant Hide Your Love - David Joseph	111734	111809
All Night Long - Mary Jane Girls	111779	111854
Kiss From A Rose - Seal	100078	108564
Gonna Go My Way - Lenny Kravitz	-	109352

TOP SELLERS	MONO	POLY
Where Is The Luv - Black Eyed Ps	120393	121454
Fields Of Athenray	100381	108273
2 + 2 = Radiohead	143300	126719
Halloween theme	100048	109159
Superstar- Jamelia	124982	125020
Lose Yourself - Eminem	138518	107810
X Gon Give It Ya - Dmx	101360	116167
Skater Boi - Avril Lavigne	108011	110068
You're A Superstar - Love Inc	109977	107822
Pass That Dutch - Missy Elliott	143849	126080
Pink Panther theme	100632	107771
Bat Out Of Hell - Meatloaf	100343	119445
Come Undone - Robbie	112605	115736
Breathe - Blu Cantrell	120539	120508
Xtm & Dj Chucky -On The Wings	116215	118500
Lose Yourself - Eminem	108002	107810
Bring Me To Life Evanescence	110559	111603
Clocks - Coldplay	108122	111125
Simply The Best - Tina Turner	100802	120612
Great Escape	100382	123019

ROCK MUSIC	MONO	POLY
Going Under- Evanescence	122505	123070
The Boys Of Summer - The Ataris	122485	124623
Bring Me To Life Evanescence	110559	111603
Did My Time - Korn	123328	121873
St Anger - Metallica	120383	120615
Faint - Linkin Park	112692	120216
The Anthem -Good Charlotte	110370	123074
Headstrong -Trapt	111160	N/A
She Hates Me -Puddle Of Mudd	102548	N/A
Sleeping Awake -P.O.D.	116230	N/A
Somewhere I Belong -Linkin Park	111021	111688
Times Like These - Foo Fighters	110059	107856
Minerva - Deftones	117180	117186
Mobscene - Marilyn Manson	116924	117261
Young & Hopeless -Good Charlotte	120300	N/A
Addicted To Love - R Palmer	111616	111514

TV & FILM	MONO	POLY
Airwolf	100621	108213
A Team	100682	107898
Axel F	100010	108195
Eye Of The Tiger	100687	108299
Friends	110615	108276
Good, Bad, Ugly	100689	108621
Friends	110615	108276
Halloween	100048	109159
The Hulk	101155	109167
Italian Job	100691	107026
Jackass	102708	117260
James Bond	100016	107023
Jaws	100764	109171
Lord Of The Rings	101158	108715
Mission Impossible	100142	107896
Miami Vice	101308	109117
Only Fools & Horses	101226	109069
Pulp Fiction	100695	108476
Raiders Of The Lost Ark	100126	109223
X Files	100160	109022
Simpsons	102191	107052
Terminator	101086	109255

RNB CHART	MONO	POLY
Hey Mama - Black Eyed Peas	149069	149074
If I Can't - 50 Cent	112700	126530
Baby I Love You- Jo Lopez	148923	144515
Yeah - Usher	148960	146155
The Way You Move - Outkast	125613	126028
Must Be Love-Fya	148626	148019
Dude - Beenie Man	148967	148628
Can't Get Enough - Raghav	149041	148014
She Wants To Move Nerd	N/A	148029
Fell In Love With A Boy - J Stone	148947	146259
Clubbin Marques Houston	149072	149077
Through The Wire - Kanye West	148988	146290
Another Day - Lemar	148360	146297
Badaboom - B2K Feat Fabolous	144374	N/A

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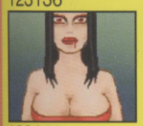
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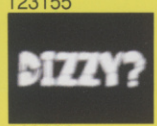

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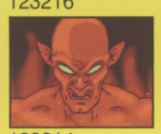
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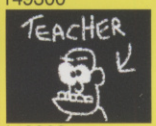

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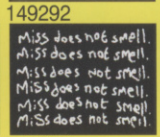

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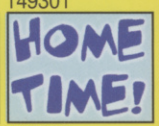

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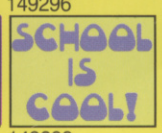

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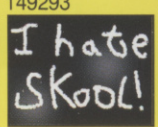

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